SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND

BEILBY PORTEUS, D.D.

BISHOP OF LONDON.

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M.DCC.XCIV.

TO THE

KING.

SIR,

THE only grounds on which I can preſume to entreat Your Majeſty's favourable acceptance of this Volume of Sermons are, that a great part of them was preached in Your Majeſty's own Chapel, and that my intention in publiſhing them was to ſerve (as far as a ſituation of much labour and little leiſure would allow) the cauſe of that holy religion, to which Your Majeſty has ever approved

proved Yourſelf a ſincere and cordial friend. An intention of this ſort, however feebly executed, will I am perſuaded, be conſidered by Your Majeſty as the beſt and moſt becoming return I can make, for thoſe ſpontaneous marks of Your Majeſty's goodneſs to me, which have impreſſed the warmeſt ſentiments of gratitude on the mind of,

SIR,

Your Majeſty's
moſt obliged,
and moſt dutiful
Subject, and Servant,

B. CHESTER.

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To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

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Preached at St. James's Chapel, March 16, 1777.

JOHN xiii. 23. *Now there was leaning on Jeſus' boſom one of his diſciples, whom Jeſus loved.*

ADVER-

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

OF the following Sermons, the ſecond, eighth, eleventh, a part of the thirteenth, and the whole of the fourteenth, have been publiſhed before, and are here reprinted, with conſiderable alterations and corrections. The reſt are now for the firſt time offered to the public.

SERMON

SERMON I.

MARK xii. 30.

THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND, AND WITH ALL THY STRENGTH. THIS IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

THE LOVE OF GOD, ſo forcibly inculcated in this and other paſſages of ſcripture, is a ſentiment purely evangelical; and is one of thoſe many peculiar circumſtances which ſo eminently diſtinguiſh the doctrines of the goſpel from the dry unanimated precepts of the antient heathen moraliſts. We never hear *them* urging the love of God, as a neceſſary part of human duty, or as a proper ground of moral obligation.

Their religion being merely ceremonial and political, never pretended to reach the heart, or to inſpire it with any ſincerity or warmth of affection towards the Deity. Indeed how was it poſſible to have any love for ſuch gods as they worſhipped: for gods debaſed with every human weakneſs, and polluted with every human vice? It was enough, ſurely, to make the people worſhip ſuch a crew. To have inſiſted upon their loving them too, would have exceeded all bounds of modeſty and common ſenſe. But Chriſtianity having given us an infinitely great and good and holy God to worſhip, very naturally requires from us the pureſt and devoteſt ſentiments of affection towards him; and with great juſtice makes the love of our Maker an indiſpenſable requiſite in religion, and the grand fundamental duty of a Chriſtian. Surely then it concerns us to enquire carefully into the true nature of it. And it concerns us the more, becauſe it has been unhappily brought into diſrepute by the extravagant conceits of a few devout enthuſiaſts concerning it. Of theſe, ſome have treated the love of God in ſo myſtical and refined a way,

and

and carried it to ſuch heights of ſeraphic extaſy and rapture, that common minds muſt for ever deſpair either of following or underſtanding them; whilſt others have deſcribed it in ſuch warm and indelicate terms, as are much better ſuited to the groſſneſs of earthly paſſion, than the purity of ſpiritual affection. And what is ſtill more deplorable, the love of God has been ſometimes made the ſcourge of man; and it has been thought that the moſt effectual way to pleaſe the Creator, was to perſecute and torment and deſtroy his creatures. Hence the irreligious and profane have taken occaſion to treat all pretence to piety as fanatical or inſincere; and even many of the worthier part of mankind have been afraid of giving way to the leaſt warmth of devout affection towards the great Author of their Being. But let not the ſincere Chriſtian be ſcared out of his duty by ſuch vain terrors as theſe. The accidental exceſſes of this holy ſentiment can be no juſt argument againſt its general excellence and utility. As the fineſt intellects are moſt eaſily diſordered and overſet, ſo the more generous and exalted our affections are, the

more liable are they to be perverted and depraved. We know that even friendſhip itſelf has ſometimes been abuſed to the moſt unworthy purpoſes, and led men to the commiſſion of the moſt atrocious crimes. Shall we therefore utterly diſcard that generous paſſion, and conſider it as nothing more than the unnatural fervour of a romantic imagination! Every heart revolts againſt ſo wild a thought. And why then muſt we ſuffer the love of God to be baniſhed out of the world becauſe it has been ſometimes improperly repreſented, or indiſcreetly exerciſed? It is not either from the viſionary myſtic, the ſenſual fanatic, or the frantic zealot, but from the plain word of God, that we are to take our ideas of this divine ſentiment. There we find it deſcribed in all its native purity and ſimplicity. The marks by which it is there diſtinguiſhed contain nothing enthuſiaſtic or extravagant. The chief teſt by which the goſpel orders us to try and meaſure our love to God is, *the regard we pay to his commands.* "He that hath my commandments, "and keepeth them," ſays our Lord, "he it "is that loveth me*." "This is the love

* John xiv. 21.

"of

" of God," ſays St. John, " that we keep his " commandments*." And again, in ſtill ſtronger terms: " Whoſo keepeth God's " word, in him verily is the love of God " perfected†." Had a proper attention been paid to ſuch paſſages as theſe, we ſhould have heard nothing of thoſe abſurd reveries which have ſo much diſgraced this doctrine. Yet, while we thus guard againſt the errors of over-ſtrained pietiſm, let us take care that we fall not into the oppoſite extreme of a cold and cautious indifference; that, as others have raiſed their notions of this excellent quality too high, we, on the other hand, ſink them not too low. Becauſe the ſcriptures ſay, that to keep the commandments of God, is to love God, therefore too many are willing to conclude that no degree of inward affection need accompany our outward obedience; and that all appearance of devout ardour is a ſuſpicious and even dangerous ſymptom. But this notion is to the full as groundleſs and unſcriptural as thoſe above-mentioned; and needs no other confutation than the very

* 1 John v. 3. † 1 John ii. 5.

words of the text. We are commanded not merely to *love* God, but to love him *with all our heart, and ſoul, and mind, and ſtrength*. Since then our *obedience* muſt be, as we have ſeen, the meaſure of our *love*, we are plainly bound by this command to *obey* him alſo with all our heart, and ſoul, and mind, and ſtrength; that is, with zeal, with alacrity, with vigour, with perſeverance, with the united force of all our faculties and powers, with one univerſal bent of the whole man towards God. The love of our Maker, then, is neither a mere unmeaning animal fervour, nor a lifeleſs formal worſhip or obedience. It conſiſts in devoutneſs of heart, as well as purity of life; and, from a compariſon of the text with other paſſages of ſcripture, we may define it to be, "ſuch a reverential admiration of God's perfections in general, and ſuch a grateful ſenſe of his infinite goodneſs in particular, as render the contemplation and the worſhip of him delightful to us; and produce in us a conſtant deſire and endeavour to pleaſe him in every part of our moral and religious conduct."

This it is that the ſcriptures mean by the love

love of God; and it is nothing more than what every man may, if he pleaſes, very eaſily acquire. It is not a new perception, of which we never experienced any thing before; it is not an unintelligible, myſterious, or ſupernatural impreſſion upon the ſoul: it is only a purer degree of that very ſame affection which we frequently entertain for ſome of the moſt worthy of our own ſpecies. This ſentiment religion finds already exiſting in our minds, and all that it does is to give it a new direction, and to turn it upon God, as its higheſt and propereſt and moſt adequate object. If then we wiſh to know ſtill more clearly in what the love of God conſiſts; and what ſhare of it we ourſelves poſſeſs; we muſt conſult our own breaſts, and conſider a little how we feel ourſelves affected towards the eminently great and good among our fellow-creatures. Now, when we obſerve any one of this character going on ſteadily and uniformly in one regular even courſe of upright, noble, diſintereſted, benevolent conduct, making it the chief ſtudy and buſineſs of his life to promote the comfort and happineſs of every hu-

man being within his reach; we can no more help eſteeming and loving and reverencing ſo excellent a perſon, than we can forbear deſiring food when we are hungry; even though we ourſelves are not in the leaſt benefited by his goodneſs. But, ſhould we be ſo fortunate as to live under his influence, and to be *intereſted* in his virtues; to have him for our friend, our benefactor, our parent, guardian, governor, or protector; then it is ſcarce poſſible for language to expreſs the emotions of affection, gratitude, and delight, which we feel in contemplating his goodneſs, and even in the very mention of his name. In caſes like this (and ſuch caſes do, God be thanked, ſometimes exiſt) how does our heart *burn within us*, how reſtleſs and impatient are we, till we find ſome better way than that of words to expreſs the ſenſe we have of our benefactor's kindneſs towards us? With what ſolicitude do we ſtudy every turn of his countenance, and endeavour to prevent his very wiſhes? We not only do what he deſires, but we do it with alacrity and ardour. We love to ſpeak of him, to think of him, to converſe with him,

him, to imitate him. We never mention him but in terms of reverence and reſpect. We are jealous of his reputation; we cannot bear to hear it lightly treated. We enter heartily into his intereſts, and adopt his ſentiments. We love what he loves, we hate what he hates, we are ready for his ſake to do any thing, to relinquiſh any thing, to ſuffer any thing. Theſe are the ſentiments we entertain, and this the conduct we obſerve towards thoſe that we love on earth; and in this manner does Chriſtianity expect us to love our father that is in heaven. If this ſincerity and ardour of affection are juſtly eſteemed both natural and laudable in the one caſe, why are they not at leaſt equally ſo in the other? Why may they not, without any ſtretch of our faculties, or any imputation of hypocriſy or enthuſiaſm, be exerciſed towards him, who is the very perfection of every thing that is great and good, who is in reality, and in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, our friend and benefactor, our parent, guardian, protector, and governor all in one? It is true, indeed, there is one difference, and that, as ſome think, a very material one, between

tween the two caſes. Our earthly friends are *ſeen*, our heavenly one is *unſeen*. But who will pretend to ſay that we can have no love for thoſe whom we have never ſeen? Do we not often conceive the higheſt regard and veneration for the worthies of paſt ages, whom we know only by the portraits that hiſtory draws of them? And even with reſpect to perſons of diſtinguiſhed excellence in our own times; it is not always neceſſary that we ſhould ſee in order to love them. It is enough that we feel that they are preſent with us, by that moſt pleaſing and convincing of all proofs, the benefits they confer upon us. Now we know that God is every where preſent: that, "he is not far from "every one of us;" that in him we moſt literally "live, and move, and have our being." Though we ſee not *him*, yet his kindneſs and bounty to us we ſee and feel every moment of our lives; and the inviſibility of the giver is amply compenſated by the ineſtimable value of his gifts. By him we were firſt brought into being; by his power that being is continually upheld; by his mercy in Chriſt Jeſus we are redeemed from ſin and miſery; by his

his grace we are excited to every thing that is good; by his providence we are hourly protected from a multitude of unſeen dangers and calamities; to his bounty we owe the various comforts and delights that ſurround us here, and the proviſion that is made for our everlaſting happineſs hereafter. Is it poſſible now to receive ſuch favours as theſe, without ſometimes thinking of them; or to think of them without being filled with love and gratitude towards the gracious author of them? If they affect us at all, they muſt affect us ſtrongly and powerfully. For, although the love of God is not a ſudden ſtart of paſſion; but a ſober, rational, religious ſentiment, acquired by reflection, and improved by habit; yet, as I before obſerved, it muſt not be ſo *very* rational as to exclude *all* affection; it may, and it ought to produce in us a ſteady and uniform, a ſedate yet fervent ſenſe of gratitude towards God; exerting itſelf in acts of adoration and praiſe, and ſubſtantialized in the practice of every Chriſtian virtue.

Have you then (aſk your own hearts) have you ever given theſe practical, theſe only

only deciſive proofs, that you really love God, as the text requires you to do, with all your heart, and ſoul, and mind, and ſtrength? Have you made his precepts the firſt and principal object of your care, and purſued other things only in ſubordination to that great concern? Have you not only admired and adored his perfections, but, as far as the infirmity of your nature, and the infinite diſtance between God and man would allow, endeavoured to imitate them? Have you delighted to think and to ſpeak of him, and never thought or ſpoke of him, but with the utmoſt veneration and awe? When you have heard his holy name profaned, or ſeen any of his ordinances or laws inſulted, have you always felt and expreſſed a proper abhorrence of ſuch unworthy behaviour? Have you ſacredly obſerved that holy day which is ſet apart for his ſervice, and not only attended public worſhip yourſelves, but taken care that all under your roof and under your protection ſhould do the ſame? Have you brought up your children "in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord*;" and amidſt all the fine accompliſhments, amidſt

* Eph. vi. 4.

all

all the prudent maxims with which you have furniſhed them, have you taught them that "wiſdom which is from above," and formed them to ſhine in *another* world as well as this? Have you gladly ſeized all opportunities of converſing with your Maker in private and in domeſtic prayer; of pouring out your ſoul before him on all occaſions, whether of ſorrow or of joy, intreating pardon for your offences, and imploring his aſſiſtance for your future conduct? Have you for his ſake been content ſometimes not only to forego many worldly comforts and advantages, but even, if neceſſary, to encounter ridicule, reproach, and injurious treatment? Have you chearfully ſacrificed to his ſervice, when called upon, your health and your repoſe, your amuſements and purſuits, your favourite paſſions and your fondeſt wiſhes, the pleaſures of youth, the ambition of manhood, the avarice of old age? Have you borne with patience and reſignation all the diſappointments, loſſes, and afflictions, that have befallen you? Have you conſidered them as the corrections of his fatherly hand, and ſubmitted without a murmur to all the diſpenſations

diſpenſations of his providence? Have you, in fine, entirely ſubdued all anxious and fretful thoughts about your temporal affairs, and acquired that abſolute compoſure and ſerenity of mind in every condition of life, which nothing but religion can give, and nothing but guilt can take away; committing yourſelves and all your concerns to the great Diſpoſer of every human event; with a perfect confidence in his infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, and a firm perſuaſion that every thing will work together ultimately for your good?

By queſtions ſuch as theſe it is that you muſt try and examine yourſelves whether you really love God or not. In all this there is nothing viſionary or fanatical, nothing but what the cooleſt heads and the calmeſt ſpirits may eaſily riſe to, nothing but what reaſon approves and the goſpel enjoins, nothing but what we ourſelves ſhould in a proportionable degree require from thoſe who pretended to have a ſincere regard and affection for us. What anſwers *you* can give to theſe queſtions your own conſciences can beſt tell. But what a very great part of

mankind

mankind can ſay to them, one may but too well imagine. Some there are, who, far from having any love for God, affect to doubt his very exiſtence, and profeſſedly make a jeſt of every thing that looks like religion. Others, immerſed in the purſuits of pleaſure, of intereſt, of ambition, have no time to waſte upon their Maker, and hardly know whether they believe a God or not. And even of thoſe who profeſs both to believe and to reverence him; how few are there that know any thing of that inward and hearty love for him which leads to univerſal holineſs of life? If they maintain an external *decency* of conduct, are juſt in their dealings, and generous to their friends, they think that all is well, and that they are in the high road to ſalvation. All their notions of duty terminate in *themſelves*, or their *fellow-creatures*, and they ſeem to have no apprehenſions of any peculiar homage or ſervice being due to their *Creator*. They can therefore, without any remorſe of conſcience, make a wanton and irreverent uſe of his holy name, in oaths and execrations, which can anſwer no other purpoſe but that of inſulting God, and giving

ing pain to every ſerious mind. Not content with the ample proviſion of ſix days out of ſeven for their buſineſs and amuſement, they muſt have the ſeventh too, or they are undone. They grudge their Maker even that ſlender pittance of time which he has reſerved to himſelf; they proſtitute the whole, or the greater part of it, to the moſt trifling or moſt unworthy purpoſes; and think it much fitter that he ſhould be robbed of his worſhip than they of their pleaſures and purſuits for a day, or even for an hour. Much leſs can they afford to ſpend a few minutes every day in *private* meditation and prayer; and as to *family devotion*, it would, they think, abſolutely ruin their character, and expoſe them to everlaſting contempt. Or if by chance they do go ſo far as to worſhip God both in public and at home, yet with what viſible languor, and coldneſs, and indifference do they often labour through this heavy taſk; and how apt are they to deride and ſtigmatize with opprobrious names thoſe who ſhow any unuſual marks of ſerioufneſs and devotion? They think it a dreadful crime to be *righteous over-much*, but none

none at all to be righteous over-little. They are terribly afraid of being called bigots and enthuſiaſts; but think there is no danger of falling into the oppoſite extreme, of luke-warmneſs and want of piety. They profeſs perhaps ſometimes, and perhaps too perſuade themſelves, that they really love God; but they give no demonſtrative proof that their perſuaſion is well-grounded, and their profeſſions ſincere. If they have the *form* of godlineſs, they too commonly want the *power* of it. Their piety is in general exterior and local, confined to the ordinary offices of devotion, and the walls of a church; not conſidering that God is equally preſent every where; that the whole world is his temple, and the ſanctity of our whole lives his worſhip. But *their* lives are conſecrated to far other purpoſes. Their affections are not ſet on things above, their views do not tend there, their hopes are not centered there, "their treaſure is on earth, and there is their "heart alſo." The main end, the great and ultimate aim, of all their actions and deſigns is not to pleaſe GOD, but to pleaſe *themſelves*; to advance their power, to enlarge their

fortunes, to multiply their amuſements. Their love of God is only ſecondary, and ſubſervient to theſe primary conſiderations; juſt as much as is *commodious* and *eaſy*, and conſiſtent with all their favourite purſuits. Satisfied with "eſchewing evil," they do not go on "to do the thing that is good;" they do not preſs forwards towards thoſe ſublime and exalted virtues, that preference of God to every worldly conſideration, that entire reſignation to the Divine will, that perfect truſt and reliance upon Heaven, which are the ſureſt proof, and the faireſt fruit, of true genuine piety. In proſperity their hearts are lifted up, and they forget God; in adverſity they are caſt down and dare not look up to him. Or if, when misfortunes preſs hard upon them, they are at length brought down upon their knees before him; yet this is commonly an act of fear rather than of love, of neceſſity rather than of choice; after experiencing what every human being will experience in his turn, the inſtability of worldly happineſs, and the weakneſs of every earthly ſupport.

What then can be ſaid for thoſe who fall under this deſcription, and what excuſe can they

they make for the neglect of ſo important a duty? For, whatever they may think of it, however lightly in the gayety of their hearts they may treat the love of their Maker, yet it is confeſſedly the FIRST AND GREAT COMMAND, and ſtands at the head of every Chriſtian virtue. If you aſk, *why* it is thus diſtinguiſhed, the anſwer is obvious. It is plainly reaſonable and right; it is conformable to all our ideas of order and propriety, that the Supreme Lord of All, the *firſt* and greateſt and beſt of Beings, ſhould have the *firſt* place in our regards, and that thoſe duties which reſpect him as their immediate object, ſhould have the precedent and command over every other. But beſides this natural fitneſs, there is another very important reaſon why the love of God is called in the Goſpel the FIRST AND GREAT COMMAND. And that is, becauſe among all the incentives to virtue, it is the only one whoſe operation is ſufficiently effectual and extenſive, the only one that can reach to every inſtance of duty, and produce an uniform conſiſtent character of goodneſs. It is *the grand leading principle of right conduct*, the original ſource and fountain from which all

Chriſtian graces flow; from whence the "living waters" of religion take their riſe, and branch out into all the various duties of human life. Other motives may *frequently* lead us to what is right. Inſtinct, conſtitution, prudence, convenience, a ſtrong ſenſe of honour and of moral rectitude, will in *many* caſes prompt us to worthy actions; but in *all* caſes they will not, eſpecially in thoſe of great danger, and difficulty, and ſelf-denial; whereas the love of God, if it be hearty and ſincere, will equally regulate the *whole* of our conduct; will, on the moſt delicate and trying occaſions, engage us to renounce our deareſt intereſts and ſtrongeſt inclinations, when conſcience and duty require it at our hands. A man without any religion at all may do good *occaſionally*, may act laudably *by chance*; his virtue may break out ſometimes in ſudden temporary gleams; but whoever wiſhes to be habitually and uniformly good, muſt have the vital principle of piety working at his heart, and by a conſtant regular warmth producing conſtant and regular fruits of righteouſneſs.

Let not then either the ſober moraliſt, or the

the gay man of the world, any longer treat this moſt holy affection with deriſion and contempt, as a mere ideal unintelligible notion, fit only for the cloyſtered monk, or the ſuperſtitious devotee. It is, on the contrary, one of the moſt uſeful, the moſt practical ſentiments belonging to our nature, adapted no leſs to active than to contemplative life, and entirely calculated to promote all the great purpoſes of ſocial happineſs and univerſal good. This is not a time, God knows, for weakening any of thoſe ties, which bind men down to their duty, much leſs for diſſolving that ſtrongeſt of all bonds, affectionate allegiance to the great Sovereign of the univerſe; which, as the ſcripture expreſſes it, *conſtrains* us to every thing that is right and good, from this powerful, this irreſiſtible motive, becauſe the author of our being, the author of every bleſſing we enjoy, demands it from us, a proof of our gratitude, as the beſt, the only return we can make to his unbounded goodneſs. Without this, every ſyſtem of ethics, however ſpecious or plauſible it may ſeem in theory, will be found on trial imperfect and ineffectual. And it is one of the many inva-

luable benefits we owe to the Goſpel; that by the addition of this *governing principle, this maſter affection*, to all the other grounds of moral obligation, it has given virtue every aſſiſtance that heaven and earth can furniſh; it has given *us* the completeſt and moſt efficacious rule of conduct that was ever offered to mankind.

SERMON

SERMON II.

JOHN iii. 19.

THIS IS THE CONDEMNATION, THAT LIGHT IS COME INTO THE WORLD, AND MEN LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT, BECAUSE THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL.

WHEN the ſeveral parts of the text are reduced to their proper order; they give us the four following diſtinct propoſitions.

That light is come into the world.

That men have preferred darkneſs to this light.

That the reaſon is becauſe their deeds are evil.

And that the conſequence of this choice will be condemnation.

It may be worth our while to beſtow a little conſideration on each of theſe particulars.

In this enlightened age, it will be thought no paradox to aſſert that "light is come into "the world." The poſition is true in more ſenſes than one; but there is only one that can ſuit this paſſage. The light here meant can be no other than that divine one of revelation which "brought life and immortality*" along with it. The Chriſtian diſpenſation is conſtantly and uniformly deſcribed in holy writ under this figure, from the time that the firſt faint glimmerings of it appeared at a diſtance, till it ſhone forth in its full luſtre and glory under the Goſpel. Indeed there ſeems to be ſcarce any other image, that could ſo fitly and adequately repreſent it to us. It is of the ſame uſe to the ſpiritual, that the light of the ſun is to the natural world. It gives life, health, and vigour, to God's new creation; it makes the "day of "ſalvation†" to dawn upon us; it opens to us

* 2 Tim. i. 10. † 2 Cor. vi. 2.

the

the proſpect of another and better than life; "it is a light to our feet and a lantern to "our paths*," and guides us in the way to happineſs and glory.

The next aſſertion contained in the text, that "men have preferred darkneſs to this "light," may ſeem to require a proof. To "love darkneſs rather than light" is ſo oppoſite to our nature, ſo inconſiſtent with our general manner of proceeding, that it ſeems at firſt incredible. If it really is the caſe, ſo perverſe a choice was never made but in religion. Every other kind of light men catch at with the utmoſt eagerneſs. The light of the heavens has been ever eſteemed one of the greateſt bleſſings that providence has beſtowed upon us, without which, even life itſelf would be hardly thought worth poſſeſſing. The love of knowledge, that light of the mind, appears in us as early, and operates in us as ſtrongly, as any one principle in our nature; and in every inſtance, the human underſtanding naturally lays hold on every opportunity of information, and opens

* Pſal. cxix. 105.

itſelf

itſelf on every ſide to let in all the light it is capable of receiving.

How then comes it to paſs that with a mind thus conſtituted, thus thirſting after light, men can ſometimes bring themſelves to do ſuch violence to their nature, as to chuſe darkneſs, in that very point where it is of the utmoſt importance to have all the light they can poſſibly get; where every ſtep muſt lead to happineſs or miſery, and every error draw after it the moſt fatal and laſting conſequences? Yet our Saviour tells us, that this was actually the caſe in his days, and would God that daily experience did not ſhow the poſſibility of it, in our own! But when we ſee the various artifices with which revelation is every day aſſailed; when we ſee one man * moſt ingeniouſly reaſoning us out of every ground of certainty, and every

* HUME; whoſe uncomfortable and unintelligible ſyſtem of Pyrrhoniſm has been expoſed with great ſpirit and eloquence in DR. BEATTIE's *Eſſay on the nature and immutability of Truth:* in which (as well as in all the other productions of the ſame excellent writer) the reader will find that union ſo rarely to be met with, of a clear head, a fine imagination, a correct taſte, and a heart thoroughly warmed with the love of truth and virtue.

criterion

criterion of truth; involving ſelf-evident axioms in obſcurity and confuſion; and entangling our underſtandings in the gloomy intricacies of ſcholaſtic ſubtility and metaphyſical abſtraction: when we ſee another* exhauſting all the powers of a moſt fertile genius in ridiculing the diſpenſations of the God that gave it; making the moſt awful ſubjects of religion the conſtant ſport of his licentious wit; and continuing to ſit with unabated levity in "the ſeat of the ſcorner," till he drops from it into the grave: when we ſee a third†, with the ſtrongeſt profeſſions of ſincerity and good faith, propoſing moſt humbly what he calls his *doubts* and *ſcruples*, and thereby creating them in the minds of others; extolling one part of Chriſtianity in order to ſubvert the reſt; retaining its moral precepts, but rejecting its miracles and all its characteriſtic doctrines; giving an air of ſpeciouſneſs to the wildeſt ſingularities by the moſt exquiſite graces of compoſition, and inſidiouſly undermining the foundations of the Goſpel, while he pretends

* VOLTAIRE. † ROUSSEAU.

to

to defend it: when, I ſay, our adverſaries aſſume ſuch different ſhapes, and ſet ſo many engines at work againſt us; what elſe can this mean but to take from us all the ſources of religious information, and bring us back again to the darkneſs and ignorance of our Pagan anceſtors? It is to no purpoſe to tell us here of the *light of nature*. It is an affront to our ſenſes, to offer us that dim taper, in the room of the "ſun of righte-"ouſneſs*." Whatever may be ſaid (and a great deal has been ſaid) of the modern improvements of ſcience, the diſcoveries of philoſophy, and the ſagacity of human reaſon, it is to revelation only we are indebted for the ſuperior light we now boaſt of in religion†. If nature could ever have pointed out to us right principles of belief, and rules of conduct, ſhe might have done it long ago; ſhe had four thouſand years to do it in before the coming of Chriſt. But what little progreſs was made in this vaſt ſpace of

* Mal. iv. 2.

† Mr. Rouſſeau himſelf confeſſes, that all the fine morality diſplayed in ſome of our modern publications, is derived not from philoſophy, but from the Goſpel. Vol. ix. p. 71.

time;

time; what egregious miſtakes were committed, not only in the ſpeculative doctrines of religion, but in ſome of the moſt eſſential points of practical morality, I need not remind you. How comes it then to paſs, that this blind guide is at laſt become ſo quick-ſighted? How comes her eye on a ſudden ſo ſtrong and clear, as to ſee into the perfections and will of God, to penetrate into the dark regions of futurity, to take in at one view the whole compaſs of our duty, and the whole extent of our exiſtence? It is plain ſome friendly hand muſt have removed the film from her eyes; and what other hand could this be than that gracious and beneficient one, which gave eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; which helped the impotence, and healed the infirmity, of nature, in every inſtance, in none more than in this? It is in ſhort from the ſacred ſources of the Goſpel, that reaſon drew that light ſhe now enjoys. Let then men walk, if they *will* be ſo perverſe, "BY THIS LESSER LIGHT*," which was only intended "to rule the "night†" of heatheniſm; but let them be

* Gen. i. 16. † Ib.

ſo

ſo honeſt as to confeſs that it is only a *borrowed*, a *reflected* light; that it owes much the greateſt part of its preſent luſtre to THAT GREATER, THAT BETTER LIGHT of the Goſpel, whoſe province it is "to "govern the day*," and "to lighten every "man that cometh into the world †."

Let us however ſuppoſe for a moment (what can never be proved) that mankind are now much better able to inveſtigate truth and to find out their duty by themſelves than they were in former ages; and that reaſon can give us (the utmoſt it ever did or can pretend to give) a perfect ſyſtem of morality. But what will this avil us, unleſs it could be ſhown that *man* is alſo perfect and uncorrupt? A religion that contained nothing more than a perfect ſyſtem of morality might perhaps ſuit an angel: but it is only one part, it is only a ſubordinate part, of the religion of a man and a ſinner. It would be but very poor conſolation to a criminal going to execution, to put into his hands a complete collection of the laws of his country, when the poor wretch perhaps ex-

* Gen. i. 16. † John i. 9.

pected

pected a reprieve. It could ſerve no other purpoſe than to embitter his agonies, and make him ſee more clearly the juſtice of his condemnation. If you choſe to do the unhappy man a real ſervice, and to give him any ſubſtantial comfort, you muſt aſſure him that the offence for which he was going to die was forgiven him; that his ſentence was reverſed; that he would not only be reſtored to his prince's favour, but put into a way of preſerving it for the future; and that if his conduct afterwards was honeſt and upright, he ſhould be deemed capable of enjoying the higheſt honours in his maſter's kingdom. But no one *could* tell him this, or at leaſt he would credit no one that did; except he was commiſſioned and authorized by the prince himſelf, to tell him ſo. He might ſtudy the laws in his hands till the very moment of his execution, without ever finding out from them that he ſhould obtain a pardon.

Such, the ſcriptures inform us, was the ſtate of man before Chriſt came into the world. He had fallen from his original innocence. He was a rebel againſt God, and obnoxious

obnoxious to his wrath. The ſentence of death had paſſed upon him, and he had no plea to offer to arreſt the execution of it. Reaſon, you ſay, gives him a perfect rule to walk by. But he has already tranſgreſſed this rule; and if even this tranſgreſſion were cancelled, yet if left to himſelf, he may tranſgreſs it again the next moment. He is uneaſy under his ſentence, he wants forgiveneſs for the paſt, aſſiſtance for the future; and till you can give him this, it is an inſult upon his miſery to talk to him of a perfect rule of action. If this be all that reaſon can give him (and it is really much more than it can give him) he muſt neceſſarily have recourſe to Revelation. God only knows, and God only can tell, whether he *will* forgive, and upon what *terms* he will forgive the offences done againſt him; what mode of worſhip he requires; what helps he will afford us; and what condition he will place us in hereafter. All this God actually *has* told us in the Goſpel. It was to tell us this, He ſent his ſon into the world, whoſe miſſion was confirmed by the higheſt authority, by ſigns from Heaven, and miracles on earth; whoſe life and doctrine

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are delivered down to us by the moſt unexceptionable witneſſes, who ſealed their teſtimony with their blood; who were too curious and incredulous to be themſelves impoſed upon, too honeſt and ſincere, too plain and artleſs, to impoſe upon others.

What then can be the reaſon that men ſtill refuſe to ſee, and perſiſt in "loving darkneſs "rather that light?" They will tell you perhaps that it is becauſe the Goſpel is full of incredible myſteries; but our Saviour tells you, and he tells you much truer, that it is "becauſe their deeds are evil." The myſteries and difficulties of the Goſpel can be no real objection to any man that conſiders what myſteries occur, and what inſuperable objections may be ſtarted, in almoſt every branch of human knowledge; and how often we are obliged in our moſt important temporal concerns to decide and to act upon evidence, incumbered with far greater difficulties than any that are to be found in ſcripture. If we can admit no religion that is not free from myſtery, we muſt, I doubt, be content without any religion at all. Even the religion of nature itſelf, the

whole conſtitution both of the natural and the moral world, is full of myſtery*; and the greateſt myſtery of all would be, if, with ſo many irreſiſtible marks of truth, Chriſtianity ſhould at laſt prove falſe. It is not then becauſe the Goſpel has *too little* light for theſe men that they reject it, but becauſe it has *too much*. "For every one that doth evil "hateth the light, neither cometh to the "light, leſt his deeds ſhould been reproved †." The light of the Goſpel is too prying and inquiſitive for ſuch an one. It reveals certain things which he could wiſh to conceal from all the world, and if poſſible from himſelf. Nor is this all; it not only reveals, but it reproves them. It ſtrikes him with an evidence he cannot bear; an evidence not only of its own truth, but of his unworthy conduct. The Goſpel does indeed offend him; but it is not his underſtanding, it is his conſcience, that is ſhocked; he could eaſily credit what it requires him to believe; but he cannot, or rather he will not, practiſe what it commands him to do.

* Vide *Voltaire, Queſtions ſur l'Encyclopedie*, V. i. p. 190. *Rouſſeau, T.* 7. *p.* 176. & *T.* 8. *p.* 17, 26, 32, 49.---12°, 1762, *Francfort.*

† John iii. 20.

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It is plain that ſuch a man cannot poſſibly admit a Revelation that condemns him; and it is *as* plain that the man of virtue cannot ſpurn the hand that is graciouſly ſtretched out to reward him. If he is a *truly* virtuous man, that is, one who ſincerely labours to know his duty, and ſincerely intends to perform it, he cannot but wiſh for more light to guide him in the inveſtigation, more aſſiſtance to ſupport him in the diſcharge of it, more happineſs to crown his perſeverance in it, than bare reaſon alone can afford him. This is what all the beſt and wiſeſt Heathens moſt ardently deſired, what nature has been continually looking out for with the utmoſt earneſtneſs of expectation. When with a mind thus diſpoſed he ſits down to examine the Goſpel, ſuggeſt to me the leaſt ſhadow of a reaſon why he ſhould reject it. He finds in it a religion, pure, holy, and benevolent, as the God that gave it. He finds not only its moral precepts, but even its ſublimeſt myſteries, calculated to promote internal ſanctity, vital piety, univerſal philanthropy. He finds it throughout ſo great and noble, ſo congenial to the fineſt feelings, and moſt generous ſenti-

ments of his ſoul; that he cannot but *wiſh* it may be true; and never yet, I believe, did any good man wiſh it to be true, but he actually found it ſo. He ſees in it every expectation of nature anſwered, every infirmity ſupported, every want ſupplied, every terror diſſipated, every hope confirmed; nay, he ſees that God has done exceeding abundantly above all that he could either aſk or think; that he has given him (what reaſon could hardly have the idea of) *eternal happineſs in a life to come*. Will this man "love darkneſs rather than that light?" Will he chooſe to purſue virtue, with much pains, little ſucceſs, and no other *wages* than *death*; or to be led to her through a ſafe and eaſy path by an infallible guide, who does not deſire him to "ſerve God for nought?"

Let me not however be underſtood to aſſert, or to repreſent the text as aſſerting, that *all* unbelievers are without exception abſolutely wicked men. There are ſome, no doubt, who lead, what is called, good moral lives. Yet, if you examine even theſe very ſtrictly, you will, I believe, ſeldom find that their virtue is ſo pure, ſo uniform, ſo extenſive,

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ſo complete in all the ſeveral branches of duty, as that of a truly devout Chriſtian. And it ſhould be obſerved alſo, that men may reject the Goſpel, not only becauſe they are diſſolute in their conduct, but for various other reaſons: becauſe, perhaps, they are too buſy, or too idle, to examine carefully into the truth: becauſe like Gallio, "they care "for none of theſe things," and like him, "drive them away" with contempt "from "the judgment-ſeat*" of their own mind; becauſe they give themſelves up to a warm lively imagination; and are impatient to ſhow that they have more depth of thought, more freedom of ſpirit, and elevation of mind, than the reſt of the world; becauſe, in fine, they are ambitious to figure at the head of a ſect, to enjoy the delightful triumph of beating down long-eſtabliſhed opinions, and erecting upon their ruins a little favourite ſyſtem of their own. Now all theſe cauſes of infidelity, though leſs culpable than downright profligacy, are yet evidently great faults, and indicate more or leſs a depraved turn of mind; and from immoralities of *this* kind at leaſt ſcarce any

* Acts xviii. 16.

ſceptics are entirely free. Or, admit that ſome are; yet theſe inſtances are confeſſedly very rare; and a prudent man would no more chuſe to embark his morality on ſo precarious a bottom, than he would venture to walk in the dark amidſt rocks and precipices, becauſe ſome perhaps have done it without receiving any harm. In general, therefore, the ground of unbelief laid down by our Saviour in the text is undoubtedly a true one; and if a man ſhuns the light, it is an almoſt certain ſign that his deeds are, in ſome ſenſe or other, in a greater or a leſſer degree, evil, and conſequently his condemnation juſt.

Yet how can this be? you will perhaps ſay. Can God puniſh his creatures for walking by that light which he himſelf has ſet up in their own minds, though he has at the ſame time perhaps revealed a fuller light from Heaven * ? Moſt certainly he can; for the very ſame reaſon that a prince might puniſh his ſubjects for acting by the law of nature, inſtead of governing themſelves by the

* De quoi puis-je être coupable en ſervant Dieu ſelon les Lumieres qu'il donne à mon eſprit, & ſelon les ſentimens qu'il inſpire à mon Cœur? *Rouſſeau, T. 8. p. 67.*

civil

civil laws of the land. It is not a matter of indifference, whether you embrace Chriſtianity or not. Though reaſon could anſwer all the purpoſes of Revelation (which is far, very far from being the caſe) yet you are not at liberty to make it your ſole guide, if there be ſuch a thing as a true Revelation. We are the ſubjects of the Almighty: and whether we will acknowledge it or not, we live, and cannot *but* live, under his government. His will is the law of his kingdom. If he has made no expreſs declaration of his will, we muſt collect it as well as we can from what we know of his nature and our own. But if he *has* expreſsly declared his will, *that* is the law we are to be governed by. We may indeed refuſe to be governed by it; but it is at our peril if we do; for if it proves to be a *true* declaration of his will, to reject it is *rebellion*.

But to reject or receive it, you may alledge, is not a thing in your own power. Belief depends not on your will, but your underſtanding. And will the righteous judge of the earth condemn you for want of under-

ſtanding* ? No; but he may and will condemn you for the *wrong conduct* of your underſtanding. It is not indeed in your power to believe whatever you pleaſe, whether credible or incredible; but it *is* in your power to conſider thoroughly, whether a ſuppoſed incredibility be real or only apparent. It *is* in your power to beſtow a greater or leſs degree of attention on the evidence before you. It *is* in your power to examine it with an earneſt deſire to find out the truth, and a firm reſolution to embrace it wherever you do find it; or on the contrary, to bring with you a heart full of incorrigible depravity, or invincible prepoſſeſſions. Have you then truly and honeſtly done every thing that is confeſſedly in your power, towards forming a right judgment of Revelation? Have you ever laid before yourſelf in one view the whole collective evidence of Chriſtianity: the conſiſtence, harmony, and connection, of all its various parts; the long chain of prophecies undeniably completed in it; the aſto-

* Eſt on maître de croire, ou de ne pas croire? Eſt ce un crime de n'avoir pas ſu bien argumenter? *Rouſſeau, tom. 6. p.* 305.

niſhing

niſhing and well-atteſted miracles that attended it; the perfect ſanctity of its author; the purity of its precepts; the ſublimity of its doctrines; the amazing rapidity of its progreſs; the illuſtrious company of confeſſors, ſaints, and martyrs, who died to confirm its truth; together with an infinite number of collateral proofs and ſubordinate circumſtances, all concurring to form ſuch a body of evidence, as no other truth in the world can ſhew; ſuch as muſt neceſſarily bear down, by its own weight and magnitude, all trivial objections to particular parts*? Surely theſe things are not trifles; ſurely they at leaſt demand ſerioufneſs and attention. Have you then done the Goſpel this common piece of juſtice? Have you ever ſat down to conſider it with impartiality and candour; without any favourite vice or early prejudice, without any fondneſs for applauſe, or novelty, or refinement, to miſlead you? Have you ex-

* A clear and elegant ſummary of the principal arguments in favour of Chriſtianity (calculated more eſpecially for the uſe of thoſe who are juſt entering into the world), may be found in Dr. Beattie's *Evidence of the Chriſtian Religion briefly and plainly ſtated.*

amined

amined it with the ſame care and diligence, that you would examine a title to an eſtate? Have you enquired for proper books? Have you read the defences of Revelation as well as the attacks upon it? Have you in difficult points applied for the opinion of wiſe and learned friends; juſt as you would conſult the ableſt lawyers when your property was concerned, or the moſt ſkilful phyſicians when your life was at ſtake? If you can truly ſay, that you have done all theſe things; if you have faithfully beſtowed on theſe enquiries, all the leiſure and abilities you are maſter of, and called in every help within your reach, there is little danger of any material doubts remaining upon your mind. But if after all there ſhould, be not afraid; truſt in God and be at peace; "if your own heart condemn "you not, then may you have confidence to-"wards God*." You are in the hands of a gracious Maſter, who will not require more of you than you are able to perform. To the modeſt, the humble, the diligent, the virtuous enquirer; who labours after conviction,

* 1 John iii. 21.

but

but cannot thoroughly arrive at it; who never attempts or wiſhes to infuſe his ſcruples into others; who earneſtly ſtrives, who fervently prays, for more light and ſtrength; crying out with all the paſſionate ſincerity of an honeſt heart, "Lord, I believe, help thou "mine unbelief*;" to him every equitable allowance will undoubtedly be made, every inſtance of compaſſionate tenderneſs be ſhown. "For like as a father pitieth his own chil-"dren, even ſo is the Lord merciful to them "that fear him †." But to them who neither *fear* nor *regard* him; to the bold unbelieving libertine, who is againſt the Goſpel, becauſe the Goſpel is againſt him; to the man of pride and paradox, who burns to diſtinguiſh himſelf from the vulgar by the novelty of his opinions, and would diſdain to follow the common herd of mankind, even though he knew they were leading him to Heaven; to the ſubtle minute philoſopher, who refines away every dictate of common ſenſe, and is loſt in the dark profound of his own wretched ſophiſtry; to the buffoon, who laughs and takes pains to make all the world

* Mark ix. 24. † Pſ. ciii. 31.

laugh

laugh at every thing ſerious and ſacred; to the indolent, negligent, ſuperficial free-thinker, who reads a little, takes for granted a great deal, and underſtands nothing thoroughly; to the man of pleaſure and amuſement, who treats all theſe things with a giddy, wanton, contemptuous, levity; and thinks that the whole fabric of Revelation may be overturned, by a ſilly cavil, or a profane jeſt, thrown out in the gay moments of convivial mirth: to theſe I ſay, and all like theſe, the Almighty will one day moſt aſſuredly ſhow, that his gracious offers of Salvation are not to be deſpiſed, and trampled upon, and ridiculed with impunity.

Conſider then, you, who reject the Goſpel (if any ſuch be here) conſider, I intreat you, *on what grounds* you reject it; and think a little ſeriouſly on theſe things once more in your lives, before you reſolve never to think again. Look well into your own hearts and ſee whether you are *really*, what perhaps you profeſs to be, unbelievers on conviction, or whether you have taken up your infidelity, as ſome do their faith, upon truſt. It becomes not *us* to judge you uncharitably; but indeed it

it becomes *you* to examine yourſelves very ſtrictly. You may eaſily deceive the world; you may, if you pleaſe, deceive yourſelves; but God you cannot deceive. He, to whom all hearts are open as the day, he knows whether you are conſcientious and honeſt doubters, or careleſs prejudiced profane deſpiſers, of his word. "It is a ſmall thing for "you to be judged of man's judgment; he that "judgeth you is the Lord *;" and by the unerring rules of his juſtice you muſt finally ſtand or fall. Think then whether you can face that juſtice without diſmay; whether you can boldly plead before the tribunal of Chriſt the ſincerity of your unbelief as a bar to your condemnation. That plea may poſſibly in *ſome* caſes be a good one. God grant it may in yours! But remember this one thing; that you ſtake your own ſouls upon the truth of it.

* 1 Cor. iv. 3. 4.

SERMON

SERMON III.

JAMES i. 13.

LET NO MAN SAY, WHEN HE IS TEMPTED, I AM TEMPTED OF GOD; FOR GOD CANNOT BE TEMPEED OF EVIL, NEITHER TEMPTETH HE ANY MAN.

NOTWITHSTANDING this general prohibition, there is one ſenſe in which it is very allowable to ſay (for the ſacred writers themſelves have ſaid it) that men *are* ſometimes tempted of God. And that is, when by *tempting* any one is meant only *trying* him, putting his ſincerity, his obedience, his faith, or any of his other virtues to the teſt. In this ſenſe God *tempted* Abraham, when he commanded him to offer up his ſon*. In this ſenſe he may be ſaid to have tempted the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs, on purpoſe (as

* Gen. xxii. 1.

Moſes

Moſes expreſsly tells us) to *prove* them, "to "know what was in their hearts, whether "they would keep his commandments or "no*." And in the ſame manner he every day ſuffers good men to fall into what is very properly called *trying* circumſtances, for the exerciſe and improvement of their virtue. To tempt men in this way, is evidently no impeachment, either of God's holineſs, mercy, or juſtice. For he does it with the beſt and moſt gracious intentions, in order to call out into action the latent great qualities of an honeſt and a good heart, to hold them up to the obſervation and applauſe of mankind, and to reward them in proportion to the ſeverity with which he tried them. At *ſuch* temptations we ought to be ſo far from repining, that, as St. James very rightly adviſes, we ſhould "count it all "joy when we fall into them†," ſhould look upon them as excellent opportunities kindly thrown into our hands by Heaven, itſelf, of demonſtrating our affection, our fidelity, our allegiance to the great Sovereign of the univerſe.

It is not therefore in this ſenſe, though a

* Deut. viii. 2. † James i. 2.

very

very ſcriptural one, that the text is to be underſtood, but in that more plain and obvious meaning, which is now almoſt univerſally affixed to the word *temptation*. We are forbid to ſay that God tempts us, as wicked men do, to commit ſin; with a deſire to draw us into it, and with ſuch powerful ſolicitations as it is impoſſible to reſiſt. This is an aſſertion ſo daring and profane, that one would think the authority of an apoſtle was not wanting to warn men againſt it. Yet, from the expreſſion he makes uſe of, "Let no "man ſay," it ſhould ſeem, as if ſome men, in thoſe times of diſtreſs and perſecution, *had* ſaid it. And even in our own times, though few, if any, are hardy enough to ſay it in expreſs terms, yet indirectly, and by neceſſary implication, it is ſaid and inſiſted upon with vehemence almoſt every day. For do we not every day hear men pleading *conſtitution* in excuſe for their wickedneſs, and throwing all the blame of their vices on the ſtrength of paſſion, or the violence of temptation? And what is this but to ſay, in other words, that they are *tempted of God?* What is it but to ſay, that he who is the author of their con-

ſtitution has given them appetites which they are not able to govern, and placed them in the midſt of temptations which it is impoſſible to reſiſt or eſcape? That the powers with which he has furniſhed them are not equal to the duties he requires, and that therefore he alone is anſwerable for the crimes into which they fall?

It ſhould be charitably preſumed, that out of the great numbers who openly avow this plea of conſtitution, and the ſtill greater numbers who ſecretly adopt and act upon it, there are but few, in proportion, who ſee the flagrant impiety of it; who are ſenſible that they ſay in effect, what the apoſtle tells us no man ought to ſay, that they are tempted of God. But whether they perceive this conſequence, or whether they perceive it not, it is highly requiſite to ſhow the falſhood of a notion, which ſtrikes at the very root of all morality and religion, and is the favourite argument in the mouth of every libertine who thinks it worth while to reaſon at all upon the ſubject.

It muſt be confeſſed, indeed, that this life is (what it would be ſtrange if a ſtate of probation

bation was not) a very painful, and almoſt conſtant ſtruggle between appetite and duty. But it will be found, I truſt, upon a fair enquiry, that we are not ſo unequal to the conflict as ſome men would willingly perſuade us to believe. They have themſelves been vanquiſhed, and would have it thought impoſſible to conquer. They would have us judge of the difficulty of the enterprize from the weak efforts they made to ſurmount it, and wilfully magnify the force of the enemy, in order to extenuate the guilt and the diſgrace of their defeat.

I mean not here to ſay, that this conqueſt is to be obtained always by mere human ſtrength alone. This were to betray the very cauſe of Chriſtianity for the ſake of defending one of its duties. Mere human ſtrength alone can, indeed, on ſome occaſions, when properly exerted, do great things; much greater than moſt men are willing to imagine. This is evident from thoſe well-known inſtances of heroic virtue in the heathen world, delivered down to us in hiſtory, which inconteſtibly prove, that the native dignity of virtue, and the ſimple efforts of unenlightened and unaſſiſted reaſon, are *ſome-*

times able to ſtand the ſhock of temptation, in the moſt delicate and trying circumſtances. But theſe inſtances are very rare; to be found only among ſome few men of elevated ſouls and improved underſtandings; and are never mentioned but as the moral prodigies and wonders of antiquity. Had man been able of himſelf "to overcome the world, and to "work out his own ſalvation," there had been no need of any new religion; God's grace had been ſuperfluous, and Chriſt had died in vain. But the groſs depravity of mankind, before the publication of the Goſpel, too plainly ſhowed the weakneſs of human nature, when left to itſelf, and evinced the abſolute neceſſity of ſome extraordinary ſupport. To give us this ſupport, and to guide our ſteps aright amidſt the ſnares and dangers that every where ſurround us, our Redeemer came from heaven; and it is the peculiar glory and prilvilege of Chriſtianity, that it is the only religion which ever did or could propoſe ſufficient motives, and afford ſufficient helps, to fortify its diſciples againſt the allurements of ſin, and to keep them unſpotted from the world.

With

With the Dieſt, then, or the Atheiſt, with him that profeſſes only natural religion, or him that profeſſes none at all, we pretend not to conteſt the point; we readily allow temptation to be, *on their principles*, ſometimes irreſiſtible, and muſt leave them to the hard dominion of unbridled paſſions, and the tumults of a diſtempered ſoul.

But to him who believes that there *is* a God, and that he is poſſeſſed of all thoſe attributes, which both reaſon and Revelation aſcribe to him, there cannot be the leaſt ſhadow of a doubt in this point, if he does not ſuffer his paſſions to throw a cloud over his underſtanding. For, can he ſeriouſly believe that a God of infinite wiſdom has given us a rule for the direction of our lives, and yet rendered it in many caſes abſolutely impoſſible for us to conform to that rule? Can he perſuade himſelf that a God of infinite mercy and goodneſs, though he *knows* the ſtrength of his creatures, yet exacts what is beyond it, and, with all the cruelty of an Egyptian taſk-maſter, demands virtue, without having given us the capacity of *being* virtuous? Can he ſuppoſe that a Being

of infinite juſtice, firſt compels us to ſin, by the ſtrength of our appetites, and then puniſhes the wretched ſinner; that he is at once the author and avenger of iniquity? Can he imagine, that he who is holineſs itſelf, who, as the text expreſſes it, *cannot be tempted of evil*, who is of purer eyes than even to behold it without indignation, is yet capable of tempting others to what he himſelf forbids and abhors? Can he, in fine, bring himſelf to think, that the precepts, the exhortations, the promiſes, the threatenings of the Goſpel, are all a mockery and inſult upon us, ſetting before us life and death, good and evil, and applying to us as free agents and accountable beings, when at the ſame time conſtitution or temptation takes from us all liberty of will, and neceſſarily determines us to a courſe of vice? This were to convert the gracious Father of mankind into a frantic and capricious tyrant over his wretched creatures, to ſtrip him of his beſt perfections, to make vain the nobleſt faculties of man, and overturn the whole fabric of natural as well as revealed religion; which is ſurely purchaſing a little ſelf-defence at much

much too high a price, and doubling inſtead of extenuating our guilt.

Had God made no expreſs declarations on this point, what has been already ſaid would be abundantly ſufficient to decide it. But he who well knew how apt men are to deceive themſelves in enquiries of this nature, and how little ſometimes the moſt concluſive arguments avail againſt the clamours of appetite, and the attractions of pleaſure, did not leave ſo important a truth to be collected from reaſon only, nor truſted the ſtrength of our underſtandings, and the honeſty of our hearts, in a caſe where they are both ſo liable to be miſled. If any thing is clearly and expreſsly revealed to us in Scripture, it is this; that we want not the *means* of ſubduing temptation, if we will but make uſe of them; that "our faith will enable us to overcome "the world; that if we reſiſt the devil he "will flee from us; that therefore, whenever "we fall, it is entirely our own fault, our "own infirmity; and that every man is then "only tempted, when he is drawn away of "his own luſts and enticed *;" of his *own*

* 1 John v. 4. James iv. 7. Ib. i. 14.

luſts, properly ſo called; not thoſe paſſions and appetites which God gave him, but thoſe unreaſonable cravings which he has himſelf created by habitual indulgence and unnatural provocations. Nay, in order to quiet all our fears, and to give us the fulleſt ſatisfaction on this head, we are aſſured, that God will, by his Holy Spirit, "help our infirmities, "and ſtrengthen us with might in the inner "man; that he knoweth how to deliver the "godly out of temptation; and if we our-"ſelves cannot *find* a way to eſcape, he will "*make* us one, and will not ſuffer us to be "tempted (unleſs we are *determined* to be ſo) "above what we are able to bear *."

After ſuch ſtrong aſſurances as theſe, by which God Almighty ſtands as it were *engaged* to befriend us, one would not think it poſſible for the wit of man to call in queſtion ſo plain a truth, as that of our ability, with the divine aſſiſtance, to correct conſtitution and reſiſt temptation. And indeed men are very ready to acknowledge it in every caſe but their own; a plain proof that the reaſon why they do not acknowledge it in their own caſe

* Rom. viii. 26. Eph. iii. 16. 2 Pet. ii. 9. 1 Cor. x. 13.

too,

too, is not becauſe they want evidence, but becauſe they want honeſty. Every one thinks that his own darling paſſion is that only inſuperable one which was deſtined to reign over the heart of man, and readily gives up all the reſt. Believe what every man ſays of himſelf, and there is not a temptation but is invincible; believe what he ſays of his neighbours, and there is none but may be eaſily ſubdued. Nay, even in the very ſame ſpecies and degree of wickedneſs, we have different meaſures of judging of ourſelves and other men. If our brother be overtaken in a fault, we condemn him without heſitation and without mercy, though he has perhaps all the infirmity of human nature to plead in his behalf. And yet we can calmly acquit ourſelves, when guilty of the very ſame crimes, by a thouſand pretended alleviations. We form diſtinctions in our own favour which have no foundation in nature, we find out particularities in our ſituation which eſcape every eye but our own. Almoſt every man, in ſpite of reaſon and experience, will flatter himſelf, that there is ſome circumſtance or other peculiar to his own caſe,

caſe, which, as it diſtinguiſhes him from the common lot, exempts him alſo from the common guilt of other men. His paſſions are ſtronger, his governing powers are weaker, or the temptation that aſſails him more violent than human nature ever before experienced. Another man, perhaps, might have come off victorious in the conflict, but, as for himſelf, he is ſo unhappily framed, or ſo unluckily circumſtanced, that he finds it in vain to reſiſt; he finds it impoſſible to oppoſe a conſpiracy, which ſeems formed againſt his virtue by every thing around him.

Nothing is more fatal, and at the ſame time nothing more common, than this piece of ſelf-deluſion. It is for this reaſon that, when St. Paul is endeavouring to ſtrengthen the Corinthians againſt the trials they were expoſed to, he ſets out with aſſuring them, "that no temptation had taken them "but ſuch as was *common to man*," as well knowing, that till he had convinced them of this all other arguments would be ineffectual. To men poſſeſſed with this opinion of uncommon difficulties in their ſituation,

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It is in vain to alledge the examples of thoſe, who have ſucceſsfully ſtruggled againſt the pleaſures or perſecutions of the world, and fought the good fight with glory. The anſwer is always at hand: They were not tempted as we were, or they would have fallen as we did. ONE, however, we are ſure there was, who was in all things "tempted "like as we are, ſin only excepted," and who was for this very reaſon tempted, that his diſciples and ſoldiers might not deſpair of conquering an adverſary, whom they had ſeen the captain of their ſalvation ſubdue before them.

It is therefore of the utmoſt importance to us, not to impoſe upon ourſelves by falſe ſuppoſitions of ſome uncommon degree of violence in the temptations that befall us, or the appetites that are given to us. There are probably thouſands of our fellow-creatures, who are in as trying a ſituation as ourſelves; thouſands at leaſt who think themſelves ſo; and have therefore full as good a claim to the plea of peculiarity as we have; that is, in fact, no claim at all; for what is common to ſo many, can be peculiar to none. Among ſo great

great a number in ſimilar circumſtances, ſome, it is certain, *do* reſiſt the ſolicitations that aſſail them; and if we are not equally ſucceſsful, it is only becauſe we are not equally vigilant and active. Sacred hiſtory (to ſay nothing of profane) will furniſh us with numberleſs examples of the moſt invincible integrity, temperance, and fortitude under the ſevereſt trials, under every poſſible diſadvantage, both of nature and ſituation, that can be imagined. What therefore, has been done once, may be done again. Human nature is nearly the ſame in all ages. Our paſſions are not ſtronger than thoſe of our forefathers; our difficulties in ſome reſpects much leſs; our natural ſtrength and ſupernatural aſſiſtances to the full as great; and if therefore we do not ſtruggle againſt the world as effectually as they did, we are left without excuſe.

But if, at laſt, men will be convinced by no experience but their own, to their own we muſt refer them; and if they will neither believe the teſtimony of man, nor the promiſes of God, they will at leaſt believe themſelves, and give credit to the report of their own

own hearts. And in fact may we not appeal to every man's own breaſt, whether he has not actually, on certain occaſions, reſiſted thoſe ſolicitations, which he declares are not to be reſiſted; whether he cannot recollect a time when a regard to reputation, to intereſt, to decency, to propriety, or ſome other caſual conſideration, has repreſſed the violence of his predominant paſſion, when moſt urgent and impetuous? The common occurrences of life make this abſolutely neceſſary; and every one that is not loſt to all ſenſe of honour and ſhame, and all regard to external appearances, muſt confeſs it to have been frequently the caſe with himſelf. How often, for inſtance, does the preſence of ſome reſpectable perſon reſtrain even the moſt irritable man alive from a ſudden burſt of paſſion, which at another time, and under the ſame temptation to indulge, he would have declared it was impoſſible to controll? It is notorious that men *can* mortify their ſtrongeſt paſſions when the pleaſe, and that they do every day forego the moſt exquiſite gratifications, from what they call *prudential motives.* There are not any more importunate appetites in man, than

than thoſe of hunger and thirſt, and yet, what is more common than, for the ſake of life and health, to do the utmoſt violence to both? Nay, even when the natural rage of thirſt is ſtill further exaſperated by the burnings of a fever, yet, if ſuch abſtinence be deemed neceſſary, we can and do deny theſe moſt earneſt cravings of the ſoul, and in this and many other inſtances undergo far greater torment for the ſake of preſerving a life we *muſt* part with at laſt, than is almoſt ever neceſſary for ſecuring the poſſeſſion of life eternal.

What our own experiences teaches us, our own conſciences confirm to us, which, by inſtantly ſmiting us for every wicked action, however ſtrongly we were prompted to it by nature or ſolicited by temptation, loudly intimate to us, that it was in our power to have done otherwiſe; for what is naturally impoſſible, can never be imputable, either here or hereafter. The truth is, theſe ſpecious pretences of ungoverable paſſions and invincible temptations cannot ſtand the teſt even at the partial tribunal of our own hearts; and how then ſhall they appear before that moſt

moſt awful and impartial one, THE JUDGEMENT-SEAT OF GOD?

Let us not, then, any longer delude ourſelves, and affront our Maker, by throwing all the blame of our miſconduct on the ſtrength of temptation or the frailty of our nature. It is enough that we have acted wickedly, let us not go on moreover, "to charge God "fooliſhly." Let us rather, with the royal pſalmiſt, "confeſs our wickedneſs, and be "ſorry for our ſins." A caſual lapſe, or a diſtreſsful ſurprize, God may and will, no doubt, upon our ſincere repentance, forgive; but a cool deliberate defence of our impiety, is an inſult upon Heaven, which can hope for no mercy. To accuſe our conſtitution, is to accuſe the author of that conſtitution; to ſay we are by any means compelled to ſin, is in fact to ſay, "we are tempted of God;" an aſſertion not only repugnant to the plaineſt declarations of ſcripture, but to the plaineſt dictates of common ſenſe. It is not God that tempts, but man that *will* be tempted. It is not by God's appointment, but by man's own negligence and ſupineneſs, that temptation becomes too ſtrong for his virtue. The growth

growth of the paſſions is gradual, and may be ſeaſonably checked; the approach of temptation is viſible, and may be eaſily guarded againſt. But, inſtead of that, we generally invite the danger, and court our own ruin; we foſter up ſome favourite appetite by conſtant indulgence, and then miſtaking, wilfully miſtaking, this monſtrous production of habit for the genuine child of nature, very diſingenuouſly complain of our paſſions and conſtitutions. We ſee the enemy of our ſalvation approaching at a diſtance, and, inſtead of preparing to make a vigorous reſiſtance, or (what is generally the ſafeſt way) a timely retreat, we either ſit ſtill in ſtupid indolence and ſuffer ourſelves to be ſubdued, or we run to meet the deſtroyer with open arms, and make haſte to be undone.

That ſome men are by nature more prone to vice than others, and that there is a difference in the original frame and temperament of our minds, as there certainly is in that of our bodies, is not perhaps to be abſolutely denied; but it muſt at the ſame time be allowed, that a bad conſtitution of mind, as well as of body, may by proper care and attention be

be greatly if not wholly amended. And, as it ſometimes happens that they who have the weakeſt and moſt diſtempered frames, by means of an exact temperance and an unſhaken perſeverance in rule and method, outlive thoſe of a robuſter make and more luxuriant health; ſo there are abundant inſtances, where men of the moſt depraved turn of mind, by keeping a ſteady guard upon their weak parts, and gradually but continually correcting their defects, "going on from "ſtrength to ſtrength," and from one degree of perfection to another, have at length arrived at a higher pitch of virtue than thoſe for whom nature had done much more, and who would therefore do but little for themſelves. It is ſaid of the great Athenian philoſopher, that he was by nature the very reverſe of all thoſe virtues, which afterwards ſhone ſo conſpicuous in his conduct; that he was born one of the worſt, and lived and died one of the beſt of men. This at leaſt is certain, that, whatever may be the corruption of our nature, whatever the power of pain to ſtagger our virtue, or of pleaſure to ſeduce it, it is impoſſible we can be ſo

formed, or ſo ſituated by a juſt and good God, as to be under an abſolute neceſſity of tranſgreſſing thoſe laws which he has laid down for the regulation of our conduct. We may reſt aſſured that he will give us powers, either natural or ſupernatural, to balance our defects. In the common trials of our virtue, the common efforts of human nature, and the common influences of the Holy Spirit, will be able to ſupport us: "if any temp-"tation take us, *more* than is common to "man," God will ſend us, provided we deſire, and endeavour to deſerve it, more than common aſſiſtance; for his ſtrength is made perfect in our weakneſs, and we may in this ſenſe, moſt truly ſay with the apoſtle, "that "when we are weak then in reality are we "ſtrong."

We are not, however, to conclude from hence, that God will deliver us out of temptation without any trouble on our part. As without *him* we can do nothing, ſo neither will he do any thing without *us*. His grace is not intended to ſuperſede, but to cooperate with, our own moſt earneſt endeavourrs; and the moſt effectual method of ſecuring

curing to ourſelves the Divine aſſiſtance, is to make a ſpeedy and vigorous uſe of all thoſe means with which we are furniſhed, for working out our ſalvation. What theſe means are, and how we may apply them to the beſt advantage, will be conſidered in a ſeparate diſcourſe.

SERMON IV.

JAMES i. 13.

LET NO MAN SAY, WHEN HE IS TEMPTED, I AM TEMPTED OF GOD; FOR GOD CANNOT BE TEMPEED OF EVIL, NEITHER TEMPTETH HE ANY MAN.

IN the preceding diſcourſe I attempted to ſhow, that to throw all the blame of our vices on the infirmity of our natural conſtitution, is in fact to ſay that we are, "tempted "of God;" that this indirect accuſation of our Maker is as groundleſs as it is impious; that the notion of ungovernable paſſions and irreſiſtible temptations, contradicts our cleareſt apprehenſions of the Divine nature and perfections, the moſt expreſs declarations of ſcripture, the teſtimony of paſt ages, and even

our own daily experience. And, although this might be deemed ſufficient for the conviction of any reaſonable man, yet, in a point of ſuch great importance, I ſhall readily be excuſed for purſuing the ſame ſubject a little further, and for going on to ſhow, not only that temptations *may* be ſubdued, but *how* they may be ſubdued; what thoſe means are, in ſhort, which reaſon and religion have put into our hands, for combating theſe enemies of our ſalvation: for it muſt at laſt be owned, that the moſt effectual way of proving any end to be attainable, is to point out the path that leads to it.

I. The firſt ſtep, then, towards reſiſting temptations, is to regulate our notions; and before we can hope to act virtuouſly, we muſt learn to think juſtly. The ſurpriſing influence which worldly allurements have over our minds, is in a great meaſure owing to the high opinion we entertain of the pleaſures or advantages they ſet before us. That reſtleſs power of the mind, THE IMAGINATION, which is "only evil continually*," is for

* Gen. vi. 5.

ever

ever leading us beyond the bounds of truth; and, by raiſing up before us certain viſionary ſcenes of happineſs, ſo excites our expectations and inflames our deſires, that we wait with impatience for an opportunity of gratifying them, and are very eaſily induced to purſue, and to ſeize with eagerneſs, what we have been accuſtomed to contemplate with ſo much pleaſure.

We muſt therefore keep a ſteady eye on this licentious wanderer, and never ſuffer it to fix our attention ſo long on improper objects, as to delude us into a falſe opinion of their excellence, and an inſatiable deſire to attain them, as indiſpenſably neceſſary to our happineſs.

Had the wretched Ahab, when he was ſtruck with the beauty and the convenience of Naboth's vineyard, called in a little timely reflexion, and a little common ſenſe to his aid; had he for one moment repreſented to himſelf the folly of ſuppoſing that the acquiſition of a few acres of land could add any thing to the real comfort of a man who was already in poſſeſſion of a kingdom, and of every enjoyment that regal power could com-

mand, he might, in this inſtance at leaſt, have eſcaped that heavy load of guilt and miſery which he and the vile partner of his throne and of his crimes, brought down upon their own heads. But the proximity of this vineyard to his own houſe had, among other circumſtances, captivated his fancy; and, inſtead of reſiſting the firſt impreſſion, and bringing his ſilly paſſion to the bar of reaſon, he indulged and cheriſhed it, till he began to think it abſolutely impoſſible for him to live without that favourite ſpot, which he wanted, it ſeems, for *a garden of herbs**. Unable to accompliſh this important purpoſe, "he laid "him down on his bed and turned away his "face, and would eat no bread†." This heavy affliction, however, was ſoon removed. His wife gave him, as ſhe had promiſed, the vineyard, which ſhe purchaſed by a murder, and he went down with joy to take poſſeſſion of it. But his joy, as is commonly the caſe with ſuch triumphant ſinners, was of very ſhort duration. He was met on the very ſpot with that ſevere rebuke, to which his own

* 1 Kings xxi. 2. † Ib. ver. 4.

conſcience

conſcience muſt have given irreſiſtible force, "Haſt thou killed, and alſo taken poſſeſſion? "Thus ſaith the Lord, in the place where "dogs licked the blood of Naboth, ſhall dogs "lick thy blood, even thine *."

Let this memorable example teach us, as well it may, not to allow our imaginations to overbear our judgments; not to give more importance to the objects of our wiſhes than their real intrinſic worth deſerves; not to perſuade ourſelves, in ſhort, as we are but too apt to do, that the whole happineſs of our lives depends on the poſſeſſion of the mereſt trifles. To ſecure ourſelves againſt this fatal error, let us learn to look on things in that true unerring light in which the Goſpel of Chriſt holds them out to us; and in eſtimating the value of earthly enjoyments, let us be careful to conſider, not merely the preſent pleaſure or profit attending them, but every diminiſhing or debaſing circumſtance which naturally belongs to them; the ſhortneſs of their duration, the pains it generally coſts us to obtain them, the ſubſtantial happineſs of

* 1 Kings xxi. 19, 20.

which

which they frequently deprive us; and the ſhame, ingnominy, remorſe, and miſery, which almoſt conſtantly ſucceed to the indulgence of every guilty paſſion. If all theſe appendages are not taken into the account, we ſhall make but a very unfair and imperfect eſtimate; and if they are, there will be no danger of our ſetting too high a value upon worldly gratifications.

It is for this reaſon, that when St. Paul is arming his Chriſtian ſoldier for this very combat againſt ſinful propenſities and allurements, the very firſt direction he gives him, is, *to have his loins girded about with truth* *; that is, to prepare himſelf for the conflict by ſtrengthening and confirming his mind with true Goſpel notions of the world and its enjoyments. This he will always find to be one of the ſtrongeſt barriers againſt the inroads of vice, one of the moſt effectual means to confine his paſſions within their due bounds, and to reſtrain him from thoſe immoral principles and irregular practices which are the moſt certain conſequences of wrong opinions.

* Epheſ. vi. 14.

II. When

II. When our notions are thus regulated, our desires will of course be much abated; for they are generally proportioned to the supposed value of the desired object. But in order more effectually to break and subdue them, we must enure them to an early obedience, and a patient submission to restraint. The man of the world affirms that temptations are irresistible; and so indeed *he* may sometimes find them; but it is only because they meet with inflamed appetites, and desires made untractable by habitual indulgence. Let the same solicitations assault a man with the same natural inclinations, but humbled and chastised by an early discipline; and these formidable assailants shall become weak and impotent things; and we shall plainly see the difference between one who seeks all occasions to excite and exasperate his passions, and one who takes every opportunity to check and to controll them. It is indeed our misfortune, that, for the first part of our lives, we are almost entirely under the dominion of our natural appetites and desires; which have therefore the advantage of making the earliest impressions upon the mind,

and

and gaining an aſcendancy over us before the light of reaſon, or the more glorious light of Revelation, breaks in upon the ſoul. And it is never to be enough lamented, that they who have the firſt care of our perſons, and who ought to train up the ſoul to habits of ſelf-government, by ſeaſonable denials and well-judged ſeverities; that theſe I ſay, through ignorance, inattention, or ill-timed tenderneſs, too often betray that moſt important truſt. By indulging every froward wiſh, every wayward humour of the infant mind, they frequently ſow deep in our hearts the ſeeds of vice; and cheriſh, inſtead of checking, thoſe turbulent deſires, which firſt trying their ſtrength in trifling, and therefore diſregarded inſtances, afterwards break out into the moſt miſchievous exceſſes, to the diſturbance of our own happineſs and the peace of mankind. It will therefore require ſome aſſiduity and addreſs to correct this unhappy defect of our conſtitution, and the ſtill more unhappy conſequences of our education. We muſt watch the firſt motions, and ſuppreſs the firſt riſings of our irregular deſires. We muſt, from the moment that reaſon takes the reins into her hands, aſſert her

her natural ſovereignty over the ſoul, and, by a timely and vigorous diſplay of her power, ſtrike a terror into her ſeditious ſubjects, and awe them at once into ſubmiſſion. We muſt be daily confirming her ſuperiority, by exerting it on all occaſions, and making uſe even of the ſlighteſt advantages over the paſſions. For every victory of reaſon over appetite, however inconſiderable in itſelf, yet by animating the one, and diſpiriting the other, adds new ſtrength to the mind; and inſenſibly habituates it to reſiſt the ſtrongeſt ſolicitations that can aſſail our virtue.

It is with this view, and this only, that the Goſpel of Chriſt ſo warmly and ſo wiſely recommends to us, the much-neglected duties of *voluntary mortification and ſelf-denial.* Chriſtianity is of too tender and compaſſionate a turn, to delight in the miſery of its diſciples, or to take an ill-natured pleaſure in thwarting our inclinations, and counteracting our nature. It never enjoins a hardſhip merely to ſee how well we can bear it, but in order to prepare us for ſome greater trial which we muſt neceſſarily undergo. Our bleſſed Lord well knew what was in man, and what kind of management was the pro-

pereſt

pereſt for him. He knew, that if we never denied our paſſions before it was abſolutely neceſſary, they would not be denied when it was ſo; and that, unleſs we ſtrengthened the governing powers of the ſoul, by frequently exerciſing their authority in leſſer matters, they would not be able to maintain it in the weightier matters of the law.

When therefore we are commanded in ſcripture, "to deny ourſelves; to take up "our croſs and follow Chriſt; to mortify "our members which are on the earth; to "beware of conforming to the world; to "pluck out a right eye or cut off a right "hand that offends us*," theſe expreſſions do by no means imply what ſome have choſen to infer from them; that we are to renounce the world, and all its pleaſures, employments, connections, and concerns; to bury ourſelves in cloiſters or deſerts; to forego every thing that is chearful or agreeable to our nature, and conſume our whole life in ſolitude, abſtinence, devotion, and unremitting auſterity. This is an idea of our religion which nothing but the ſtrangeſt miſconception of it by its

* Luke ix. 23. Col. iii. 5. Rom. xii. 2. Matt. v. 29. 30.

friends,

friends, or the groſſeſt miſrepreſentation of it by its enemies, could poſſibly have ſuggeſted. According to the faireſt and moſt eſtabliſhed rules of interpretation, when applied to the ſtrong figurative language of the Orientals, theſe phraſes, and many others of the like import in the ſacred writings, mean nothing more than (what every wiſe moraliſt muſt approve, and every man of experience muſt know to be abſolutely neceſſary to the preſervation of our virtue in the midſt of a corrupt world) a conſtant habit of vigilance, circumſpection, and ſelf-government; a cautious and jealous attention to the movements of our minds and the progreſs of our paſſions; a diſcreet and ſober, not a criminal and unbounded conformity to the world; a renunciation of *ourſelves*, that is, of all *ſelfiſh and ſordid views* that interfere with the conſcientious diſcharge of every religious obligation; a ſtrict abſtinence from all irregular and immoral gratifications, without either declining any of the duties, or ſullenly withdrawing from the harmleſs enjoyments, conveniences, and comforts of ſocial life. It is true, in ſhort, that an exact, or, if you pleaſe, rigorous diſcipline

is

is required of every man, who enlists under the banners of the cross. "He must en-"dure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus "Christ*." And although this has been made a frequent topic of ridicule or of complaint among those who call themselves philosophers, and has been represented as a grievous burthen too heavy for human nature to support; yet this *moral discipline* of the soul is grounded on the same reasons, and justifiable on the same principles, as that strict *military discipline*, to which it is frequently compared in Scripture, and which every wise commander finds it necessary to exact and to maintain among his soldiers. It may appear to them sometimes harsh and severe, but it leads to order, ease, security and victory. The case is the same in our Christian warfare. Every restraint which the Gospel imposes on us tends ultimately to make our "yoke easy "and our burthen light," and its very cruelties, if we may call them so, are in fact tender mercies. We must therefore submit with patience to the sacrifices it demands from us, and we shall be amply repaid for the transient

* 2 Tim. ii. 3.

uneasiness

uneaſineſs which at firſt perhaps they may give us. We muſt, in compliance with its injunctions, not only abſtain from thoſe luſts which "openly war againſt the ſoul*," but, like them who ſtrive for the maſtery in the combat or the race muſt be "temperate in all "things †," muſt train up ourſelves for the good fight of faith by frequent preparatory exerciſes, muſt "keep the body under, and "bring it into ſubjection ‡" by timely precautions, and judicious reſtraints, that, when temptation calls upon us for the trial of our virtue, our deſires may be found patient of controll, and able to ſupport a diſappointment.

III. There are two extremes to be equally avoided in our moral conduct, becauſe, though oppoſite to each other, they may prove equally fatal to our virtue; a too high opinion of our adverſary's ſtrength, or a too great confidence in our own. If once we are perſuaded that all reſiſtance is vain, we ſhall never call forth the ſtrength that God has put into our hands, but tamely give ourſelves up on the

* 1 Pet. ii. 11. † 1 Cor. ix. 25. ‡ Ib. ix. 27.

firſt appearance of danger; or if, on the contrary, we flatter ourſelves that *no* reſiſtance is neceſſary, "a ſudden deſtruction" ſhall come upon us unawares, and we ſhall fall into what may be properly called "our own miſchief." To ſteer then diſcreetly between theſe two oppoſite points is what demands our utmoſt care and attention. We muſt, on the one hand, poſſeſs ourſelves with a proper ſenſe of our own natural reſources, a firm truſt in God's ſupernatural aſſiſtance, and a thorough conviction that our endeavours, if honeſtly and earneſtly exerted, "ſhall not be in vain "in the Lord;" and on the other, from a due conſciouſneſs of our own weakneſs and corruption, neglect no precaution in our power, nor wantonly or heedleſsly expoſe ourſelves to unneceſſary danger. This indeed is the more common error of the two, and therefore to be the more carefully guarded againſt. Men are much more apt to have too high, than too low, an opinion of their own fortitude, and ſo fall through want, rather than exceſs, of caution. It will, therefore, generally be the ſafeſt way to diſtruſt our own courage and reſolution, and to avoid rather

ther than to provoke temptation; for we may often ſave ourſelves by a timely retreat, when we ſhould have made but a weak and inglorious defence.

It is indeed always our own fault if ever we find ourſelves beſet with ſolicitations, which prove too ſtrong for our virtue. We may generally recollect a time, when, if we had but exerted the leaſt reſolution, they muſt have vaniſhed before us. But we indolently give way to one wrong compliance after another, which we might eaſily have reſiſted at firſt; and then, when it is too late to exert the ſtrength which our Maker has given us, we boldly reproach him with having given us none at all. There is, in ſhort, a point at which we have it in our power to ſtop; but if, through a fatal negligence, or a falſe ſecurity, we let that opportunity ſlip; if we ſuffer ourſelves to be drawn a little further, and ſtill a little further on, whatever ſnares we may afterwards be entangled in, we can have no reaſon to complain of being ſurprized by ſtratagem, or overcome by ſuperior force. The powers we are furniſhed with may not always be ſufficient to extricate us *out* of

difficulties, but they are fully ſufficient to preſerve us from plunging *into* them.

IV. But in order to guard againſt temptation ſtill more effectually, take unto you, my brethren, the SHIELD OF FAITH *; for this, as St. John aſſures you, "is the victory that "overcometh the world, even our faith †." And the apoſtle might well promiſe theſe great things of faith, ſince it is this which ſupplies us with one of the principal things we want, a counterpoiſe to the pleaſures and the intereſts of this life. For by faith is here meant a firm, a rational, and a vital belief of the being of God, of the religion taught by Chriſt, and the truth of his promiſes and his threatenings as declared in the Goſpel; a perſuaſion that God *is*, and that he is through his bleſſed Son, "a rewarder of all thoſe that "diligently ſeek him ‡." It is this perſuaſion, and this only, which in certain circumſtances can preſerve our integrity and our innocence unſhaken. With this world, as it ſometimes happens, ſpreads before us on a ſudden its moſt powerful allurements and ad-

* Eph. vi. 16. † 1 John v. 4. ‡ Heb. ii. 6.

vantages,

vantages, and every thing conſpires to make them operate with their full force upon the heart; what is there that can deſtroy the influence of ſuch dangerous attractions, and reſcue us from preſent ruin? Can honour, can intereſt, can reputation, or thoſe moſt watchful natural guardians of our virtue, pride and ſhame? Theſe, alas, whatever they may do in ſome trifling inſtances, are found to be weak and ſlender ties, "as flax burnt with fire *," when oppoſed to the violence of ſome paſſions, and the ſhock of ſome temptations. It is here then faith ſteps in to our relief, and interpoſes, between us and danger, that HEAVENLY SHIELD, which is proof againſt all aſſailants, or, to uſe the more forcible and expreſſive language of ſcripture, "where-"with we ſhall be able to quench all the "fiery darts of the wicked one †." Of this every ſincere believer may have, whenever he pleaſes, experimental conviction. For if he will but frequently and ſeriouſly meditate on thoſe awful doctrines which the Chriſtian revelation ſets before him; that there is a

* Judges xv. 14. † Eph. xi. 16.

moral governor of the univerſe, infinite in wiſdom, juſtice, power, and holineſs; that in his preſence we continually live and act; that his all-ſeeing eye is conſtantly fixed upon us, "is about our bed, and about our "path, and ſpieth out all our ways;" that there is not ſo much as "a word in our "mouth, or a thought in our heart, but he "knoweth it altogether*;" that, when the glory of this world has paſſed away, there will be a general reſurrection to another, a future ſtate of exiſtence, a moſt ſolemn day of retribution; that our great judge will then require a ſtrict account of all our thoughts, words, and actions, and will make it known to the whole world, that, "verily there *is* a "reward for the righteous, doubtleſs there *is* "a God that judgeth the earth†:" if, I ſay, the ſincere Chriſtian will but take care, by frequent meditation and recollection, to impreſs a deep ſenſe of theſe momentous truths upon his ſoul, and render them familiar to his thoughts, he will by degrees ſo encreaſe his faith, and ſo accuſtom himſelf to this train of reflections, that the moment temptation

* Pſalm cxxxix. 3, 4. † Pſalm lviii. 11.

aſſaults

aſſaults him, they will habitually and mechanically recur to his mind; the rewards and puniſhments of a future world will inſtantly preſent themſelves to his view; the fear of the Lord will come upon him, and he will ſay with the patriarch on a like occaſion, "how can I do this great wickedneſs, and "ſin againſt God*?"

V. There is ſtill one thing more remaining, which, though occaſionally touched upon before, is of ſuch great importance as to require in this place a diſtinct conſideration, ſince without it all our other reſources will be ineffectual, and that is the aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit. To our great comfort we are aſſured, that, although the powers of our own weak and corrupt nature may frequently be inſufficient to carry us ſucceſsfully through the difficulties we have to encounter, yet the grace of God will be at all times, and in the greateſt exigencies, ſufficient for us†. This divine and powerful inſtrument of our deliverance is, as we are informed, always to be obtained by prayer. "Our heavenly Father will give his Holy "Spirit to them that aſk him. Whatſoever

*Gen. xxxix. 9. † 2 Cor. xii. 9.

" we aſk in prayer, believing, we ſhall re-
" ceive*." But then it is not in time of need only we muſt " ſeek the Lord;" in the moment of danger we may be reduced to ſuch ſtraits that nothing but a miracle can ſave us. We muſt therefore make God our friend long before, and provide againſt the evil day while it is yet afar off, and all ſeems peace and ſecurity around us. His Holy Spirit is not to be made ſubſervient to a preſent purpoſe, to be invoked in our neceſſity, and ſlighted in time of ſafety; he muſt either abide conſtantly with us, or for ever remain a ſtranger to us. It is not an occaſional ejaculation, vented by accident or extorted by fear, that will bring him down from heaven; it is only upon repeated ſolicitations, and a due preparation for his reception, that this divine gueſt will condeſcend to take up his abode with us. We are, as the apoſtle expreſſes it in his ſtrong manner of ſpeaking, " to pray
" always with all prayer and ſupplication,
" and watch thereunto with all perſeve-
" rance†." And this will not only draw down upon us a plentiful effuſion of Divine grace, but improve and confirm our own in-

* Luke xi. 13. Matth. xxi. 22. † Eph. vi. 18.

ternal

ternal ſtrength; will engage our attention, excite our induſtry, encreaſe our caution, and even ſuggeſt to us every human means of deliverance. For prayer has of itſelf a natural tendency to obtain its own purpoſes, and we grow inſenſibly better whilſt we wiſh to be ſo.

It is, in ſhort, on our own vigilance, circumſpection, and ſelf-diſcipline, added to our moſt earneſt prayers for the divine aſſiſtance, that all our virtue here, and all our happineſs hereafter, through the merits of our Redeemer, entirely depend. If a man *will* throw himſelf in the way of danger, and venture to the very brink of vice; if he *will* ſuffer his thoughts to wander, or dwell upon improper objects; if he knows his weak parts, and yet leaves them without defence; if he ſees a growing appetite, and inſtead of checking, ſeeks every opportunity to feed and to inflame it; if he confines his views to preſent enjoyments, nor ever ſpends a thought upon futurity; if, in fine, he lives without God in the world, without any awe of his preſence, any truſt in his aſſiſtance, or any fear of his judgments, he muſt expect that the ſlighteſt temptations will get the better of his virtue, already half ſubdued.

But

But if, on the contrary, he ſets himſelf ſeriouſly and in earneſt to ſearch out and to correct his infirmities; if he flies at the firſt approach of temptation, and takes alarm at the moſt diſtant intimation of danger; if he curbs that buſy dangerous power, the imagination; "if he keeps his heart with all di-"ligence *," and guards the iſſues of life; if, as the apoſtle adviſes, he takes unto him THE SHIELD OF FAITH, oppoſing the joys of heaven to the pleaſures of ſin, and having leſs regard to a preſent gratification than the future recompence of reward; above all, if he never ceaſes importuning the throne of Grace for the aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit to purify his ſoul, invigorate his reſolutions, and ſupport him under all the difficulties and diſcouragements of his Chriſtian warfare; he may depend upon it, that whatever may be his *conſtitution*, whatever the nature or degree of the temptations he is expoſed to, not all the powers of darkneſs ſhall be able to prevail againſt him. Though he may perhaps accidentally fall, yet he ſhall "never be caſt "away; for the Lord upholdeth him with "his hand †."

* Prov. iv. 23. † Pſal. xxxvii. 24.

SERMON

SERMON V.

MATTHEW XXV. 46.

AND THESE SHALL GO AWAY INTO EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT: BUT THE RIGHTEOUS INTO LIFE ETERNAL.

THIS is one among numberleſs other paſſages in holy writ, in which a future judgment, and an eternal ſtate of exiſtence hereafter, are clearly and poſitively announced to us; and it is from theſe declarations of the Goſpel, and theſe only, that we derive the *certain* expectation of immortal life. To pretend, therefore, as ſome have done, that we had already ſufficient notices of this important truth from the light of nature, and that the conviction, produced by theſe notices,

is ſo complete as to ſuperſede the neceſſity of any further information, is to give nature a degree of merit, to which ſhe is far from having any juſt pretenſions, and to make a very ungrateful return for the invaluable advantages we have received, in this and many other reſpects, from the Revelation made by Chriſt. But yet to aſſert, on the other hand, that natural religion gives us not the ſmalleſt ground to hope that we ſhall ſurvive the grave, and that every argument for it, except thoſe which Scripture ſupplies, is perfectly vain and nugatory, and unworthy of the leaſt regard, is ſurely running into another extreme, no leſs deſtitute of foundation, and no leſs hurtful in its conſequences than the former *. The natural and moral evidences of another life after this, though confeſſedly inferior, very greatly inferior in authority and force, to thoſe of Revelation, yet undoubtedly have their proper weight and uſe;

* It has been very juſtly obſerved, that ſome writers, by exalting the powers of reaſon, in matters of religion, too high, have deſtroyed the *neceſſity* of Revelation, and others, by degrading them too low, have riſqued the *reaſonableneſs* of it. Div. Leg. vol. ii. p. 26.

and

and to depreciate their juſt value, and ſink them as much as poſſible in the eſtimation of manking, is to do no real ſervice (although there may have been a ſincere *intention* of doing it) to the cauſe of Chriſtianity; which has no need, in this or in any other inſtance, to riſe on the ruins of human reaſon. On the contrary, it diſdains not to receive reaſon as its friend and ally, and occaſionally to elucidate and confirm both its doctrines and its precepts, by ſuch collateral arguments as that faculty is capable of ſupplying. In the preſent caſe more eſpecially, the conſideration of a future ſtate is a ſubject ſo full of comfort and ſatisfaction, that the mind of man muſt neceſſarily love to dwell upon it; muſt wiſh to contemplate it in every point of view; to examine it in every light, whether natural or revealed; to let in conviction from every quarter; and muſt be ſoothed and delighted to find that ſo important an article of belief, on which ſo much depends both in this life and the next, is perfectly conformable to the natural ſentiments of the human heart, and the juſteſt concluſions of the human underſtanding. This muſt be the caſe, even with

the ſincereſt believers. But there are ſome alſo (as is but too well known) in every Chriſtian country, who are *not* believers, and yet profeſs to receive, on the principles of natural religion, the doctrine of another life, and a day of recompence. Now, no one, I think, would wiſh to deprive even theſe of their perſuaſion, on whatever grounds it reſts, that they are formed for immortality, and that they are reſponſible for their conduct here, at the bar of their Creator hereafter. There are other unbelievers (for they are divided into many different ſects) who, though not yet convinced of a future ſtate of exiſtence, are willing to liſten to the natural and moral evidences in its favour, and to no others. Theſe, ſurely, it is of great importance, both to ſociety and to themſelves, to bring, if poſſible, to the acknowledgment of a future retribution. This acknowledgment will, even on their own principles, bind them down to a courſe of action very different from that which a contrary perſuaſion would have been apt to produce; and will, moreover, in all probability, pave the way for their *entire belief* of a religion which they

they will find ſo perfectly harmonizing with their favourite oracle, Reaſon, in this moſt intereſting point, and which profeſſes to give them the moſt authentic information concerning that unſeen world, the reality of which they already admit to have been proved *.

Whereas if, on the contrary, with a view of converting the Infidel to Chriſtianity, and impreſſing him with a high ſenſe of its dignity and importance, you ſet out with aſſuring him that reaſon gives us not the ſlighteſt hope of immortality; that ſoul and body periſh together in the grave, but are both raiſed to life again at that general reſurrection which the Goſpel promiſes; he will aſſent probably, without ſcruple, to the former part of your propoſition, but will never be perſuaded, on the ſole authority of a Revelation which he rejects, to liſten to the concluding part.

It may therefore contribute not a little, both to the ſatisfaction of the Chriſtian, and

* That fundamental doctrine of religion (a future ſtate) would, if believed, open and diſpoſe the mind ſeriouſly to attend *to the general evidence of the whole.* Butler's Anal. c. 1.

the

the conviction of the unbeliever, to ſtate, with as much brevity and perſpicuity as the nature of the enquiry will admit, ſome of the plaineſt and moſt obvious of thoſe proofs of a future exiſtence, which our own reaſon is capable of ſuggeſting to the mind *.

The firſt queſtion that naturally preſents itſelf on this ſubject, is, whether that percipient and thinking agent within us, which

* The ſubſtance of this and the two following ſermons was written and preached ſeveral years ago. The diſcourſe now before us is not, I confeſs, of that kind which I ſhould naturally have ſelected for publication. But the progreſs which the doctrine of *materialiſm* has already made on the continent, and is now endeavouring to make in this kingdom, induced me to think, that a compendious view of the moſt intelligible arguments for the immateriality and natural immortality of the ſoul, as well as of the other principal evidences of a future ſtate, both moral and ſcriptural, would not be at this time either unſeaſonable or unuſeful. The *young reader*, at leaſt, for whoſe uſe theſe three diſcourſes were principally intended, will here find (what can alone be expected, on ſo extenſive a ſubject, in ſo ſhort a compaſs) ſome general and leading principles to direct his judgment on a queſtion of no ſmall importance; to guard him againſt too haſty a deſertion of the received opinion concerning it; and to prepare him for a more profound and accurate inveſtigation of it, if ever he ſhould feel himſelf diſpoſed to purſue the enquiry any farther.

we uſually call THE SOUL, is only a part of the body, or whether it is ſomething totally diſtinct from it? If the former, it muſt neceſſarily ſhare the extinction of the body by death; and there is an end at once of all our natural hopes of immortality. If, on the other hand, the latter ſuppoſition of its diſtinct ſubſiſtence be the true one; it is plain that there will then be no reaſon to preſume, that the intellectual and the corporeal part of our frame muſt periſh together. That fatal ſtroke which deprives the latter of life and motion, may have no other effect on the former, than that of diſlodging it from its preſent *earthly tabernacle*, and introducing it into a different ſtate of exiſtence in another world.

Now, whatever difference of opinion there may have been among ſpeculative men, either antient or modern, concerning the ſpecific nature of the human ſoul; yet in this they have all, with very few exceptions, univerſally agreed, that *it is a ſubſtance in itſelf, actually diſtinct and ſeparable from the body*, though in its preſent ſtate cloſely united with it. This has been the invariable opi-

nion of almoſt all mankind, learned or unlearned, civilized or ſavage, Chriſtan or Pagan, in every age and nation of the world. There is ſcarce any one truth that can be named, which has met with ſo general a reception as this. We diſcover it in the earlieſt authors extant, both poets and hiſtorians; and it was maintained by every philoſopher among the antients (except by Anaximander, Democritus, and their followers *) as well as by all the primitive Chriſtian writers, without, I believe, a ſingle exception. Even they who ſuppoſed the ſoul to be material (which was undoubtedly ſuppoſed by ſeveral Pagan philoſophers, as well as by two or three of the Chriſtian fathers)

* See Cudworth's Intellectual Syſtem, vol. i. b. i. c. i. and ii. and c. v. p. 836---841.

Cicero (Tuſc. Quæſt. l. i. c. 22.) mentions no more than two philoſophers, Dicæarchus and Ariſtoxenus, who maintained that man had no ſoul; and he gives their reaſon for this opinion---*quia difficilis erat animi quid & qualis ſit intelligentia.* This principle, if carried to its full extent, would, I am afraid, prove equally that we have no bodies; becauſe, as the greateſt of our philoſophers, Newton, Locke, &c. have repeatedly aſſerted, it is full as difficult to comprehend the nature of a *corporeal* as of an *incorporeal* ſubſtance. Yet this principle ſeems ſtill to have no ſmall weight with the patrons of Materialiſm.

yet

yet uniformly held it to be a ſubſtance *diſtinct from the body*. They ſuppoſed it to be air, or fire, or harmony, or a fifth eſſence, or ſomething of a finer, purer, more ætherial, texture than groſs matter; and many of them conceived it alſo to be immortal, or capable of becoming ſo. Nor was it only the polished and enlightened nations of Greece and Rome, of Egypt and Aſia, that believed man to be a compound being, conſiſting of two ſeparate ſubſtances, but even the rudeſt and moſt barbarous tribes, of whom hiſtory has preſerved any traces. And it is well known, that wherever curioſity, commerce, or the ſpirit of adventure has extended modern diſcoveries, this notion has been found exiſting. It has been found as prevalent throughout the vaſt continents of India and America, and the various iſlands of the Atlantic Ocean, and the ſouthern hemiſphere, as in every other quarter of the globe *. So general a ſuffrage of almoſt the whole human race, in favour of this opinion, is ſurely a very ſtrong preſumption of its truth. It proves it to be no

* See all the late voyages to thoſe parts, by Captain Cook and other navigators.

leſs conformable to the firſt natural apprehenſions of the untutored mind, than to the ſoundeſt principles of philoſophy *. And it will, I apprehend, receive no ſmall confirmation from conſidering ſome of the more remarkable operations of the ſoul itſelf.

It is evident, that the intellectual part of our frame exerciſes a ſuperintending and ſovereign command over the body. It moves, directs, controlls, ſupports, protects, and governs the whole corporeal ſyſtem. Now, in other caſes, we ſee that the MOVING POWER is ſomething different from the MACHINE it actuates. We are therefore led by analogy to conclude, that the ſoul is as diſtinct from the body, as the force of gravity is from the clock which it ſets in motion, or the wind that fills the ſails, and the pilot that ſits at the helm, from the veſſel which the one ſteers and the other impels.

And indeed the ſoul itſelf gives, in various inſtances, very ſtrong indications that this is actually the caſe. That power which it ſometimes exerts, when immerſed in pro-

* Omni in re conſenſio omnium gentium LEX NATURÆ putanda eſt. Tuſca. Quæſt. l. i.

found

found thought, of abſtracting itſelf, of being *abſent* as it were from the body, and paying no regard to the impreſſions made upon it by external objects; that authority by which it corrects and over-rules the reports made to it by the ſenſes, for which it frequently ſubſtitutes the concluſions of its own judgment; that facility with which, by turning the mental eye inward, and contemplating itſelf and all its wonderful operations, in the management of its internal ſtores, it forms a new ſet of ideas peculiarly its own, purely intellectual and ſpiritual *; that vigour which it ſometimes manifeſts in the moſt excruciating diſorders, and even at the approach of death, when its earthly tenement is all ſhattered and decayed; the eſſential difference there is between the pains and pleaſures of the body and of the mind; the emotions often raiſed in us, without any external impreſſion, by the eminent virtues of great and good men, in diſtant ages and countries; the aſtoniſhing activity and vivacity, the fertility of invention, and rapidity of tranſition, which the ſoul frequently diſ-

* Locke, b. ii. ch. 1. ſ. 4.

plays in dreams, when the body, and all its ſenſes and powers, are benumbed and locked up in ſleep; the variety of unexpected ſcenes which it then, by a kind of enchantment, raiſes up to view; the ſtrange and unheard-of perſons, places, incidents, and converſations, it ſometimes creates, totally unconnected with any occurrences of the preceding day, and of which not the ſmalleſt traces are to be found in the memory; and above all, that aſtoniſhing, yet well-atteſted phenomenon of SLEEP-WALKING, where, though the eyes are inſenſible to all external impreſſions, and ſometimes entirely cloſed, yet the SOMNAMBULIST directs himſelf with unerring certainty through the moſt intricate windings, and over the moſt dangerous precipices, and, without any apparent aſſiſtance from the organs of ſenſe, has been known to read, write, and compoſe *; all theſe circumſtances taken together, muſt be allowed to form a very ſtrong accumulation of evidence, that our thinking part is ſomething more than *mere organical*

* See a moſt extraordinary and well-authenticated inſtance of this in the Encyclopedie, article *Somnambule*.

mechaniſm,

mechaniſm, ſomething, in ſhort, *diſtinct*, and capable of acting *ſeparately* from our corporeal frame *.

It is true, indeed, there are many caſes in which the mind appears to be conſiderably affected by the ſtate and circumſtances of the body. But all theſe appearances will admit as eaſy a ſolution from the hypotheſis of two diſtinct eſſences, cloſely united, and powerfully ſympathizing with each other, as from the ſuppoſition of our being one ſingle, ſimple, uncompounded, homogeneous ſubſtance.

If then the preceding remarks have rendered it highly probable that we are endued with a principle of perception diſtinct from the body; the main point, reſpecting the capacity of the ſoul to ſurvive the grave, is eſtabliſhed; and, although it may be extremely uſeful and ſatisfactory to the mind, yet it is

* Even *one* of the many circumſtances here collected together, viz. the vigour and vivacity which the mind frequently diſplays, when the body is almoſt worn out with pain, ſickneſs, and old age, had force enough to convince a celebrated wit, infidel, and libertine of the laſt century (but who afterwards became a ſincere convert to Chriſtianity) that the ſoul was a ſubſtance totally diſtinct from the body. See *Bp. Burnet's account of Lord Rocheſter*, 5th ed. p. 20, 21.

not *abſolutely eſſential to the argument*, to prove that the ſoul is formed of a *different kind of ſubſtance* from the body, or in other words, that it is *immaterial*. For even granting for a moment (what I truſt will very ſoon appear to be inadmiſſible) that it is nothing more than a ſyſtem of organized matter; yet, ſince it is, by the ſuppoſition, diſtinct from the body, it does by no means follow, that when the body dies, the ſentient ſyſtem will alſo be diſſolved and periſh. The ſame Almighty Being that could ſuperadd to dead matter, ſo extraordinary and ſo unlikely a power as that of thought, could alſo, if he pleaſed, with preciſely the ſame eaſe, ſuperadd to it the ſtill further power of ſurviving the grave. A *material* ſoul, therefore, may ſtill, for any thing we know to the contrary, be an *immortal* one. But at the ſame time, it muſt be confeſſed, an incorporeal eſſence bids ſo much fairer for immortality, and is withal an opinion which has ſo much better grounds to ſupport it, that I ſhall intreat your patience, while I juſt touch, as conciſely as poſſible, on a few of the principal arguments which are uſually adduced in favour of this doctrine.

It has been repeatedly ſhewn, by ſome of the ableſt philoſophers and metaphyſicians, that the complex nature, the diviſibility, and the inertneſs of matter, are totally inconſiſtent with perception, thought, conſciouſneſs, ſpontaneous motion, and all the other active and ſimple powers which evidently diſtinguiſh our mental part; that all the poſſible arrangements, combinations, and modifications of figure and motion, can generate nothing but figure and motion, and that it is juſt as credible, that the union of a taſte and a colour ſhould produce a ſound, as that any thing ſo totally remote from all reſemblance to the properties of body, as intelligence plainly is, ſhould reſult from the mechanical operations of any corporeal ſyſtem, however curiouſly contrived, diſpoſed, or organized.

Arguments of this kind, if unfolded and purſued to their full extent, would afford very ſatisfactory proofs of an incorporeal percipient. But I forbear leading you further into ſuch diſcuſſions; not only becauſe they are unſuitable to this place, and would bewilder us in an endleſs labyrinth of minute

and

and abſtruſe inveſtigations, but alſo for this plain reaſon; becauſe, after all, it might be ſaid, that, although perception and reflection cannot perhaps be the *natural reſult* of mere matter and motion, yet God certainly may, if he thinks fit, *ſupernaturally* annex them to a ſyſtem of organized matter, ſuch as the medullary ſubſtance of the brain probably is.

Now it would undoubtedly be preſumptuous in man to decide with peremptory boldneſs, what is, or is not, poſſible for his Creator to do, and to preſcribe bounds to his almighty power; but thus much we may be allowed to ſay, that Omnipotence itſelf cannot work a contradiction; and to our weak apprehenſions it has very much the *appearance* of a contradiction, to ingraft ſelf-motion, activity, intelligence, volition, conſciouſneſs, ſimplicity, and indiviſibility, on a dead clod of earth; on a ſubſtance, which, if we may either credit our ſenſes, or the ſentiments of the moſt eminent philoſophers, is a ſolid, extended, compound, diviſible maſs, incapable of changing its own ſtate,

and

and making reſiſtance to motion *. For, refine and ſubtilize matter as much as you pleaſe, yet ſtill it muſt retain its eſſential characteriſtic properties; and it is not very credible that it ſhould have two different ſets of properties belonging to it, equally eſſential, and diametrically oppoſite to each other. Of ſuch an union as this, we have no inſtance in nature, nor is there any analogy that can lead us to expect it, or think it poſſible. Nothing leſs, one ſhould think, could induce any one to adopt ſo harſh a concluſion, than the *cleareſt and moſt deciſive evidence* that

* The reader will perceive that here, and in other parts of this diſcourſe, I adhere to the received opinion of the *ſolidity*, *impenetrability*, and *vis inertiæ* of matter. At the ſame time, I am not ignorant that it has of late been controverted, and a very different ſyſtem advanced, by men of conſiderable ability. But, notwithſtanding the great ingenuity of their arguments, I muſt confeſs myſelf not very willing to abandon the principles of ſuch men as Locke, Clarke, Newton, Maclaurin, &c. &c.; and perhaps the intelligent reader will be diſpoſed to think this attachment to old opinions, ſomething more than early prejudice, when he has peruſed with care *Mr. De Luc's Lettres Morales et Phyſiques, tom.* i. *D.* 10, 11, 12, 13, 14; where he will find this very abſtruſe queſtion diſcuſſed, and in my conception decided, with a truly philoſophical penetration, clearneſs, and preciſion.

there

there cannot poſſibly be any ſuch thing as an immaterial ſubſtance. But ſo far is this from being capable of proof, that the actual exiſtence of ſuch ſubſtances is a truth which reſts on the higheſt authority, and is ſupported by arguments which have never yet been overthrown.

In the very firſt dawn of philoſophy, two ſorts of ſubſtances, eſſentially different from each other, were ſuppoſed to exiſt, which were diſtinguiſhed by the names of MIND and BODY. This diſtinction was expreſsly maintained by Plato, Ariſtotle, and almoſt all the antient Theiſts, from Thales down to Seneca. Many of them held alſo, that BODY, or MATTER, was in its own nature eſſentially paſſive, inert, and incapable of moving itſelf, and that the only active power in the univerſe was mind, or incorporeal ſubſtance *. This

* Ἱκανωτατα δεδεικται ψυχη των παντων πρεσβυτατη, γινομενη τε αρχη κινησεως. *Plato de Leg. l.* x. *p.* 952. *Ed. Fic.*

Της μεν ὑλης το πασχειν εστι και το κινεισθαι· το δε κινειν και το ποιειν ἑτερας δυναμεως. *Ariſtotle de Gen. & Corrupt. l.* ii. *c.* 9. *p.* 407. *See alſo Phyſ. l.* viii. *c.* 5. *p.* 325. *and Metaphyſ. l.* xii. *c.* 7. *p.* 471. And in his book de Anim. l. i. c. 2. he gives the opinions of ſeveral antient philoſophers concerning MIND, of whom the greater part agree in making it the principle of motion.

great

great principle they ſuppoſed to be diffuſed through every part of nature*; they conceived it to be the immediate cauſe of vegetation, animal life, and intelligence, and they ſeem to have thought it impoſſible that there ever ſhould have been any ſuch thing as motion in the world, had there never been any ſubſtance exiſting in it but matter †.

This idea, inſtead of being reprobated by the wonderful diſcoveries and ſuperior lights of modern philoſophy, receives, on the contrary, the ampleſt confirmation from them. It is well known to be an eſtabliſhed principle of this philoſophy, to be laid down as

* See thoſe well-known and beautiful lines in Virgil: *Principio cælum et terras, &c. Æn. l.* vi. *v.* 724. And again, *Deum namque ire per omnes, &c. Georg.* iv. *v.* 221.

† On theſe principles of the antient philoſophy, is founded the PLASTIC NATURE of the profound and learned Cudworth; and alſo that hypotheſis of the univerſal dominion of MIND, and the exiſtence *of a diſtinct, internal, active principle* in every part of nature (not excepting even inanimate ſubſtances) which is maintained by the very ingenious author of a book lately publiſhed, entitled *Antient Metaphyſics*. This ſyſtem, few, I conceive, will be diſpoſed to admit in all its extent; but yet the lovers of antient learning and philoſophy will receive from it much curious information; and the advocates for immaterialiſm will find in it ſome new arguments for that doctrine well worthy their attention.

the firſt and fundamental law of nature, that matter is in itſelf *perfectly inactive*, and incapable of changing the ſtate it happens to be in, whether of motion or of reſt; and that conſequently all the motion now in the world (unleſs you ſuppoſe it to have been eternal) muſt have derived its origin from *an immaterial agent*. Nor is this all. Some of the moſt illuſtrious diſciples of the Newtonian ſchool contend farther, that not only the *origin* of motion, but the *continuance* of it alſo, requires the perpetual agency of ſomething different from, and ſuperior to, matter. They think it clear to demonſtration, that all the great movements of the univerſe are both produced and carried on by the unremitted exertions of *ſome immaterial power*; and that the exiſtence and operation of ſuch a power is not only probable but certain, and even abſolutely neceſſary for the preſervation of the courſe and order of nature *. The great Author

* See Clarke's Dem. p. 74. D°'s Evid. of Nat. and Rev. Religion, p. 14, 22. 10th ed. And Maclaurin's Account of Sir Iſaac Newton's Philoſophy, b. iv. c. 9. ſ. 12, 13. p. 387.

Add to this, what has been aſſerted, and I think proved, by writers of conſiderable eminence, that the properties of corpuſcular

thor of nature himſelf, is confeſſedly an *incorporeal* being. He was acknowledged to be ſo by the moſt ſagacious of the antient metaphyſicians *; and the moſt celebrated of the modern, not only thought that the immateriality of the Supreme Being was demonſtrable, but that he had himſelf demonſtrated it †.

Aſſuming it therefore as an undoubted truth, that there is *one* incorporeal Being at leaſt in the world, it follows that there *may be more*. And when we conſider by what gradual and eaſy ſteps the ſcale of exiſtence aſcends from inanimate matter up to man; and what an infinite number of creatures of

puſcular attraction and repulſion, obſervable in all material ſubſtances, and appealed to ſometimes as proofs of their activity, are not powers inherent in the ſubſtances themſelves (which in that caſe muſt, in contradiction to an eſtabliſhed rule in philoſophy, *act where they are not*, that is, at a diſtance from their own ſurfaces) but the effects of *ſome active principle*, entirely diſtinct and eſſentially different from matter. Sir Iſaac Newton himſelf ſeems to have had ſome idea of this kind in his thoughts. Optics, 2d ed. p. 376, 377.

* Ariſt. Metaph. l. xii. c. 7. p. 742, and Περι Ξενοφανους, p. 944. Nec vero Deus ipſe alio modo intelligi poteſt, niſi mens ſoluta quædam & libera. Tuſc. Quæſt. l. i. c. 27.

† Mr. Locke's Eſſay on Hum. Und. b. iv. c. 3. ſ. 6; note p. 167; and b. iv. c. 10. p. 245, 250.

different

different orders and properties are comprehended within theſe limits, it is very natural to conclude, that, in the inviſible world above us, in the immeaſurable diſtance between us and the FATHER OF SPIRITS, there is a far longer ſeries and progreſſion of ſpiritual beings, each riſing above the other in purity and perfection, than of material ſubſtances below us. This idea of the inviſible world is well ſuited to our conceptions of the wiſdom, power, and goodneſs of our almighty Creator, and to that grandeur, regularity, order, and harmony, which reign throughout the univerſe *.

Let us now ſee the reſult of this enquiry. It may be drawn into a very narrow compaſs.

It appears that there are the beſt grounds for aſſerting, not only the *poſſible*, but the *actual*, exiſtence of INCORPOREAL SUBSTANCES.

It is certain alſo, that ſuch ſubſtances are capable of active and intellectual powers; for of ſuch powers, infinitely exalted, is the Supreme Being himſelf poſſeſſed.

* Eſſay on Hum. Und. b. iii. c. 6. ſ. 12.

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At the ſame time, we ſee around us *other* ſubſtances of a very different nature, which we call *material* or *corporeal*; and which not only evidently appear to our ſenſes to be inert, ſluggiſh, paſſive bodies, utterly void of ſenſation, intelligence, and ſpontaneous motion, but have, by the moſt diligent inquiries into nature, been pronounced abſolutely incapable of thoſe properties.

Now to one of theſe two claſſes of ſubſtances muſt that active, lively, conſcious, thinking, reflecting power within us, which we call the SOUL, belong. Let reaſon; let the common ſenſe of mankind determine which of them it is.

On this ſhort ſimple iſſue, muſt the queſtion before us ultimately reſt. We leave it to every man to decide for himſelf, and a plain unbiaſſed underſtanding cannot decide wrong.

Difficulties, it muſt be allowed, there are, attending even the moſt probable of theſe two opinions, that of an immaterial ſoul. But in the apprehenſion of moſt men, I believe, they are not to be compared with thoſe that encumber the contrary ſyſtem. To ſuppoſe that the human mind, with all its wonder-

ful faculties and powers, is formed of materials eſſentially the ſame with the pebble we tread under our feet; and that a maſs of lead, if properly organized, is capable of the ſublimeſt flights of imagination, and of all the various attainments and exertions of the moſt active, vigorous, and comprehenſive underſtanding; is ſurely more repugnant to the natural conceptions of mankind, and does more violence to the very firſt principles of what has been hitherto deemed the ſoundeſt philoſophy, than any difficulties that may embarraſs the doctrine of an incorporeal percipient. Even Mr. Locke himſelf, who had certainly no unreaſonable prejudices againſt the capacities of matter, and muſt therefore be allowed to be a very impartial as well as a very able judge of the point now before us; even he, after maturely weighing the arguments and objections on both ſides of the queſtion, acknowledges it to be *in the higheſt degree probable*, that the ſoul of man is *immaterial* *.

* *Eſſay on Hum. Und. b.* iv. *c.* 3. *ſ.* 6. *Note* p. 141, *and* 143. Whilſt I know, by ſeeing or hearing, &c. that there is ſome corporeal being without me, the object of that ſenſation, I do *more certainly know*, that there is ſome *ſpiritual being* within me, that ſees and hears. This I muſt be convinced *cannot be* the action of bare inſenſible matter; *nor ever could be, without an immaterial thinking being. Ib. b.* xi. *ch.* 23. *ſ.* 15. *p.* 259.

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We may therefore ſafely venture to pronounce this opinion to be moſt conſonant to reaſon and philoſophy, as well as to the moſt received notions of mankind. The neceſſary conſequence of this is, that a man is *a compound being*, conſiſting of a material body, and an immaterial ſoul, intimately and vitally united together; each preſerving its own powers and attributes diſtinct, yet acting in perfect concord and harmony with each other. In what manner, and by what means, they are ſo united, and how two ſuch diſſimilar ſubſtances can reciprocally influence and act upon each other, is indeed more than we are able to comprehend. But this can never be juſtly urged againſt the reality of ſuch an union, unleſs it be laid down as a maxim in philoſophy, that the ſtrength or weakneſs of our conceptions is the meaſure of truth and falſehood, and that every thing which we do not perfectly underſtand is therefore impoſſible. We can juſt as eaſily conceive the connexion and mutual influence of ſoul and body, as we can explain how the minute component particles of matter cohere ſo firmly together, as to form what we call ſolid exten-

ſion; how the whole proceſs of vegetation is carried on through all its ſucceſſive ſtages; how the food of animals is converted into nutriment and contributes to their ſupport and growth; how finite matter can be infinitely diviſible; and how two mathematical lines, indefinitely produced, can be for ever approaching each other, and yet never meet *. When theſe, and a thouſand other truths, equally incomprehenſible, yet incontrovertible, in almoſt every branch of ſcience, and every part of nature, are made perfectly clear and intelligible, it will then be time enough to ſhow how the ſoul and body are linked together, and rendered capable of acting on each other.

In the mean while, it is evident, that in the wide range of creation there was ſufficient room for ſuch a combination as this; and, reaſoning from analogy, it was natural to ſuppoſe that there ſhould be, ſomewhere or

* Nous ne ſavons ni comment nous recevons la vie, ni comment nous la donnons, ni comment nous croiſſons, ni comment nous digérons, ni comment nous dormons, ni comment nous penſons, ni comment nous ſentons. Notre nature, celle de l'univers, celle de la moindre plante, tout eſt plongé pour nous dans un gouffre de tenebres. *Voltaire. Queſtions ſur l'Encyclopédie*, article *Ame*, p. 176, 190.

other,

other, ſuch a complex being as man, compoſed of a material body and an immaterial ſoul, and thus uniting together the viſible and inviſible world; juſt as, in the various orders and gradations of beings aſcending up to man, we ſee that in paſſing from one claſs of exiſtence to another, there is always ſome one ſpecies that ſeems to partake of the nature of both; which is, as it were, the link that ties them together, and forms the common boundary between inanimate matter and vegetation; between vegetation and animal life; between animal life and intellect.

This union then of the two conſtituent parts of the human frame, ſubſiſts till it is diſſolved by death; which we have no reaſon to think can have any other effect upon the ſoul, than that of diſuniting it from the body. For the former is, as we have ſeen, a ſentient principle, totally diſtinct from the latter. It *may* therefore continue to exiſt, and to think, when the body is reduced to duſt; and if it be moreover (as we have ſhewn to be highly probable) incorporeal, it cannot be ſubject to that decompoſition of parts which occaſions the diſſolution of the body. Our whole

corporeal frame undergoes we know, an entire change, probably more than once, during the courſe of our lives; yet the ſoul continues all the while invariably the ſame. Why then may it not alſo ſurvive, unaltered, that total change of the body, which is occaſioned *all at once* by death, as well as the *gradual* one, which is produced by other cauſes? The preſumption moſt certainly is, that it will, unleſs any proof of the contrary can be given, which I conceive it will not be very eaſy to do *. Our almighty Creator may undoubtedly, if he thinks fit, by an extraordinary act of his power, put a period even to our immaterial part, when its frail companion dies. But there is no imaginable reaſon for ſuppoſing that he will. The body itſelf is not totally deſtroyed by death. It is only reduced to a different ſtate of exiſtence. It loſes life and motion, and its organical mechaniſm is broken in pieces; but its component elementary materials ſtill remain; and there is no inſtance, as far as we know, of any one particle of matter being annihilated throughout the univerſe. Why, then, ſhould

* See Butler's Analogy, c. 1.

we

we imagine that the ſoul will, after its ſeparation from the body, be deprived of all exiſtence, when nothing elſe in nature is? To aſſert, as Lucretius and others have done *, that it cannot exiſt, or retain perception, thought, and reaſon, without the aſſiſtance of the body, and the organs of ſenſe, is a concluſion too unphiloſophical for the preſent age to admit. In this viſible world, indeed, and the ſtate of exiſtence here aſſigned to the ſoul, the concurrence and aſſiſtance of a certain ſyſtem of organized matter, are rendered neceſſary for carrying on, and producing to view, its various operations. But to infer from hence, that ſuch a ſyſtem will alſo be indiſpenſably neceſſary in *another* ſtate, in that inviſible world which immediately ſucceeds this, and where there may be various modes of exiſtence totally unknown to us at preſent, is to affirm, what no human being (unleſs, like St. Paul, he has been caught up into the third heaven) can poſſibly prove. On the

* *Lucretius, l.* iii. *v.* 559 *and* 631. Neque aliud eſt quidquam, cur incredibilis his videatur animorum æternitas, niſi quod nequeunt, *qualis animus ſit vacans corpore intelligere. Tuſc. Quæſt. l.* i. *c.* 22.

contrary, it has been ſhown, that the actual exiſtence of ſuch a thing as an immaterial, *unembodied*, intellectual eſſence, is ſo far from involving any contradiction, that it is by many thought to be *demonſtrable* *.

The vey nature, then, of the human ſoul itſelf, as far as we are capable of comprehending it, gives us the ſtrongeſt ground to believe that it is immortal. But it ought at the ſame time to be obſerved, and it is an obſervation of great importance in this queſtion, that although the ſuppoſition of an immaterial ſoul ſurviving the diſſolution of the body is, as we have ſeen, a doctrine in the higheſt degree probable, and undoubtedly adds no ſmall credibility and force to the other evidences of a future ſtate; yet the great proofs, the great *natural* and *moral* proofs, I mean (for to theſe only our preſent enquiries extend) of this moſt comfortable truth, reſt on quite a different foundation; on that firm and immoveable foundation, *the belief of a moral governor of the univerſe*, infinite in wiſdom, juſtice, goodneſs, and power. A being ſuch as this, let the nature of the human ſoul be

* See above, p. 111.

what

what it will, can raiſe it, if he pleaſes, from any ſuppoſable ſituation after death, to another ſtate of exiſtence, and reſtore to it that perception of its identity, that conſciouſneſs of its former ſentiments and conduct, which will render it a proper ſubject of puniſhment or reward. Should it therefore appear (as in the two following diſcourſes I truſt it will) that from conſidering the nature and attributes of God, the faculties of man, and the conſtitution of the world in which he is placed, there are the beſt grounds for believing that he is *an accountable being*, we may reſt aſſured, that of *whatever materials* his ſentient part is compoſed, Omnipotence will not want the means of placing him hereafter in an *accountable ſtate*.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

MATTHEW XXV. 46.

AND THESE SHALL GO AWAY INTO EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT: BUT THE RIGHTEOUS INTO LIFE ETERNAL.

THE arguments advanced in the foregoing diſcourſe, are, I conceive, ſufficient to ſhew, that, as far as we are able to comprehend the nature of the human ſoul, we have reaſon to conclude it is a diſtinct and an immaterial ſubſtance, and of courſe capable of ſurviving the diſſolution of the body. But theſe, as I have already obſerved, are far from being the only or the moſt deciſive proofs of a future exiſtence. There are other ſtill plainer and more ſatisfactory evidences of that important truth, diſcoverable even by the light of nature, which I ſhall now proceed to open and lay before you.

I. Conſider,

I. Conſider, in the firſt place, the many excellent faculties of the human ſoul; the imagination, memory, reaſon, judgment, will; the vaſt variety and rapidity of its operations; the power it has of receiving ſuch a multitude of ideas from external objects; of depoſiting them in the ſtore-houſe of the memory for many years; of drawing them out again for uſe whenever it thinks fit; of comparing, arranging, combining, and diverſifying them in ſuch an infinite number of ways; of reflecting, meditating, and reaſoning upon them; of comprehending ſuch a prodigious number of different arts and ſciences; of creating the exquiſite beauties and refined delights of muſic, painting, and poetry; of carrying on, through a long train of dependent propoſitions, the moſt abſtruſe and intricate ſpeculations; of extracting, from a few plain, ſelf-evident axioms, a demonſtration of the moſt ſublime and aſtoniſhing truths; of penetrating into every part of the material, the vegetable, the animal, the intellectual world; of conceiving and executing ſo many wiſe and beneficial deſigns; of turning its eye inward upon itſelf; of obſerving and regulating

regulating its own movements; of refining, purifying, and exalting its affections; of bringing itſelf, by a proper courſe of diſcipline and ſelf-government, to bear with patience the acuteſt pains and the heavieſt afflictions; to face with intrepidity the greateſt dangers; to reſtrain its ſtrongeſt paſſions; to reſiſt the moſt inviting temptations; to exert, upon occaſion, the moſt heroic fortitude; to renounce, for the ſake of conſcience and of duty, all that this world has to give; to abſtract itſelf from all earthly enjoyments; to live as it were out of the body; to carry its views and hopes to the remoteſt futurity, and raiſe itſelf to the contemplation and the love of divine and ſpiritual things. Conſider, now, whether it be probable, that a being poſſeſſed of ſuch aſtoniſhing powers as theſe, ſhould be deſigned for this life only; ſhould be ſent ſo richly furniſhed into the world merely to live a few years in anxiety and miſery, and then to periſh for ever? Is it credible, is it poſſible, that the mighty ſoul of a Newton ſhould ſhare exactly the ſame fate with the vileſt inſect that crawls upon the ground; that, after having laid open the myſ-

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teries of nature, and puſhed its diſcoveries almoſt to the very boundaries of the univerſe, it ſhould on a ſudden have all its lights at once extinguiſhed, and ſink into everlaſting darkneſs and inſenſibility? To what purpoſe all this waſte and profuſion of talents, if their operation is to be limited to this ſhort period of exiſtence? Why are we made ſo like immortal beings, if mortality is to be our lot? What need was there, that this little veſſel of ours ſhould be fitted out and provided with ſtores ſufficient to carry it through the vaſt ocean of eternity, if, at the ſame time, its voyage was meant to be confined within the narrow ſtraits of the preſent life? Inſtinct would have ſerved for this purpoſe as well as reaſon, would have conducted us through the world with as much ſafety, and with leſs pain, than all our boaſted intellectual endowments.

II. Another preſumption in favour of a future ſtate, is *the perpetual progreſs of the ſoul towards perfection*, and its endleſs capacity of further improvements and larger acquiſitions. This argument has been ſet in ſo ſtrong and beautiful a light, by one of our fineſt

fineſt writers *, that it is hardly poſſible to do juſtice to it in any other words than his own. "A brute," ſays he, "arrives at a point of perfection, which he can never paſs. In a few years, he has all the endowments he is capable of, and were he to live ten thouſand more, he would be the ſame thing he is at preſent. Were a human ſoul thus at a ſtand in her accompliſhments; were her faculties full blown, and incapable of further enlargement; I could imagine ſhe might fall away inſenſibly, and then drop at once into a ſtate of annihilation. But who can believe that a thinking being, which is in a perpetual progreſs of improvements, and travelling on from perfection to perfection, muſt periſh at her firſt ſetting out, and be ſtopped ſhort in the very beginning of her enquiries? Death overtakes her, while there is yet an unbounded proſpect of knowledge open to her view, whilſt the conqueſt over her paſſions is ſtill incompleat, and much is ſtill wanted of that perfect ſtandard of virtue, which ſhe is always aiming at, but can never reach. Would an infinitely wiſe Being create ſuch

* Mr. Addiſon.

glorious

glorious creatures for ſo mean a purpoſe; or can he delight in the production of ſuch abortive intelligences? Would he give us talents, which are never to be fully exerted, and capacities which are never to be filled? Is it not far more reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that man is not ſent into the world merely to propagate his kind; to provide himſelf with a ſucceſſor, and then to quit his poſt: but, that thoſe ſhort-lived generations of rational creatures, which riſe up and diſappear in ſuch quick ſucceſſion, are only to receive their firſt rudiments of exiſtence here, and then to be tranſplanted to ſome more friendly climate, where they may ſpread and flouriſh; where they may go on from ſtrength to ſtrength; where they may ſhine for ever with new acceſſions of glory, and brighten to all eternity * ?"

III. There is, in the human mind, *a conſtant and a natural tendency towards futurity.* Our thoughts are perpetually wandering from the preſent moment, and looking for-

* *Spectator*, No. 111. The whole of this inimitable paper (of which the ſubſtance only, with a few variations, is here given) is highly worthy of the attention of the reader.

wards

wards to ſomething that is to take place hereafter. Be our happineſs ever ſo great, yet it is not ſufficient to gratify and content the ſoul. There is always a void left in it, which can never be filled up without calling in the aid of futurity, without the anticipation of ſomething more than we at preſent poſſeſs. Whatever may chance to be our ruling paſſion, whether it be the love of wealth, of power, of honour, of pleaſure, we are ſcarce ever ſatisfied with that ſhare of it which we enjoy; but are always thirſting and reaching after more, are perpetually forming projects from which we promiſe ourſelves greater ſatisfaction than any we have yet experienced. There is conſtantly ſome favourite object in view, ſome point to be obtained; and "we are continually hurrying over ſome period of our exiſtence, in order to arrive at certain imaginary ſtations or reſting-places," where we hope to find that quiet and content which has hitherto eluded our ſearch. We reach thoſe wiſhed-for ſituations, but "we find no reſt for the ſole of our feet *." The imaginary horizon of our project flies

* Gen. viii. 9.

before us as we advance; no ſooner do we gain one eminence, than another inſtantly appears beyond it; and when that is paſſed, ſtill others preſent themſelves in endleſs ſucceſſion to our view. Thus are we continually drawn on through life with the ſame deluſive expectations. We live upon the future, though the future conſtantly deceives us; we continue graſping at diſtant happineſs, though it always eſcapes out of our hands, and go on to the very end, preſſing forwards towards ſome imagined good, with the ſame eagerneſs and alacrity as if we had never ſuffered the leaſt diſappointment in our purſuit.

There are two other paſſions, that reſpect *futurity*, belonging to our conſtitution, no leſs remarkable; and theſe are, *the love of life*, and *the deſire of fame*. The former of theſe is common to all mankind. There is a natural dread of extinction planted in every human breaſt. The ſoul ſhrinks back with horror from the thoughts of annihilation. It cannot bear the idea of ſinking into nothing, and ſharing the fate of that body which it uſed to animate and inform. There may indeed be ſome men ſo profligate as to pleaſe themſelves

themſelves with the thought of having their whole exiſtence terminated in the grave, and of renouncing all expectation of a future reviviſcence. But the reaſon of this is, not becauſe they have no deſire to continue in being, but becauſe they dread *non*-exiſtence leſs than a *miſerable* exiſtence, which, if there be another ſtate, they are ſure muſt be their lot. It is this fear which over-rules their natural love of life. Take away this, and they would be as averſe to annihilation as the reſt of mankind *.

Akin to this deſire of continuting our exiſtence, is the deſire of continuing our memory beyond the grave. This was the chief ſource of all thoſe noble, diſintereſted, and public-ſpirited actions, which we admire ſo much in ſome of the antient Pagans. *We*, indeed, *who know*, that "if our "earthly houſe of this tabernacle were

* This dread of extinction, and paſſionate love of life, ſeem to have operated with ſurpriſing force on the minds of the antients, and are expreſſed by them ſometimes in the ſtrongeſt and moſt emphatical terms. That famous wiſh of Mecænas, *Debilem facito manu, &c.* which Seneca, who quotes it, juſtly calls, *Turpiſſimum votum*, is not the only inſtance of this kind. Vid. Senec. Ep. 101. and Lipſius's notes on the paſſage.

" diſſolved, we have a building of God, a " houſe not made with hands, eternal in the " heavens *," and that conſequently our name is not the only part of us that ſhall eſcape the hand of death, have much higher and more powerful incentives to virtuous conduct than the proſpect of an ideal immortality. Yet ſtill, ideal as it is, and utterly unworthy to be compared with that ſubſtantial and truly glorious eternity which is reſerved for us in the heavens, it has notwithſtanding no ſmall influence upon our hearts. Nor is this the caſe only with men of exalted minds and cultivated underſtandings, but in ſome degree even with the loweſt and moſt ignorant of mankind. Almoſt every one is deſirous of leaving a reputable character behind him, of being celebrated after he is gone, by the little circle of his friends, for his good ſenſe or his good-humour, his charity or hoſpitality, his honeſty or fidelity; and every church-yard we ſee is full of the little artifices of humble ambition to ſecure ſome ſmall portion of poſthumous renown. There are perhaps a few, who, during

* 2 Cor. v. 1.

their

their lives may be, or ſeem to be, indifferent as to the judgment of poſterity concerning them. But yet even theſe, when they are on the point of leaving the world, are commonly as ſolicitous as any others to clear up any thing that affects their character, and to guard their memories with all the care they can againſt miſrepreſentation and calumny. Although they may have no deſire of a *great* name, yet they cannot forbear wiſhing to have a *good* one, or at leaſt not to have a *bad* one; a clear proof that they are far from being unconcerned about their future reputation. We may therefore ſafely affirm, that the love of fame is in ſome degree or other univerſal. We are almoſt all influenced by it to do things from which we can reap no preſent credit or advantage, and of which, perhaps, the world will know nothing till after our deceaſe. When our own times are unjuſt to us, we appeal to future ages for redreſs; and we have always ſome kind friend on whoſe care and tenderneſs we rely for the vindication of our conduct, if it ſhould ſtand in need of it when we are gone.

Taking then together all that has been ſaid

on this ſtrong *leaning of the ſoul towards futurity*; its conſtant diſſatisfaction with preſent enjoyments, and inceſſant purſuit of diſtant happineſs; its ſtrong deſire of life and immortality, and its fondneſs for the good-will and applauſe of poſterity; what ſhall we infer from this remarkable conſtruction of the human mind? Has a wiſe and a good God furniſhed us with deſires which have no correſpondent objects, and raiſed expectations in our breaſts, with no other view but to diſappoint them? Are we to be for ever in ſearch of happineſs, without arriving at it, either in this world or the next? Are we formed with a paſſionate longing for immortality, and yet deſtined to periſh after this ſhort period of exiſtence? Are we prompted to the nobleſt actions, and ſupported through life, under the ſevereſt hardſhips and moſt delicate temptations, by the hopes of a reward, which is viſionary and chimerical, by the expectation of praiſes, of which it is utterly impoſſible for us ever to have the leaſt knowledge or enjoyment *? Theſe ſuppoſitions are utterly irreconcileable

* It was evidently the opinion of the excellent Archbiſhop Secker, that we ſhall in another ſtate be ſenſible of the regard ſhown

irreconcileable with our apprehenſions of God's moral perfections, and his uſual method of treating us. "It is not his way to lead us by illuſions and deceits. He has not, in any other inſtance, given us natural propenſities, which he knew at the ſame time there was no poſſibility of gratifying, nor filled us with unavoidable apprehenſions of what ſhould never come to paſs *." Why then ſhould we imagine that he has done ſo in the caſe before us, and in that only? Is it not infinitely more reaſonable to conclude, that our appetite for immortality has, like all other appetites, its proper means of gratification; that the natural bent and tendency of the ſoul towards futurity is a plain indication, that to futurity it is conſigned; that it is intended for another ſtate of exiſtence, where it will find that ſatisfaction it looks for here in vain; and where hope will at length be ſwallowed up in enjoyment?

ſhown to our characters by thoſe who ſurvive us. He has, I truſt, already experienced the truth of his own doctrine. Few men had a greater intereſt in it than himſelf. See his Sermons, vol. vii. ſer. xviii. p. 403, 404.

* Clarke.

IV. The ſame concluſion follows from viewing man on the moral ſide. That variety of faculties with which he is endowed, and the circumſtances in which he is placed, plainly prove him to be *an accountable being*. Human actions are evidently diſtinguiſhable into two ſorts, between which there is an eſſential and unalterable difference. Some are naturally right and good, others naturally wrong and evil. God has impreſſed upon our minds a ſtrong *internal ſenſe* of this difference, together with an approbation of what is right, and a diſapprobation of what is wrong. He has alſo given us reaſon to direct us, where natural ſentiment happens to fail, and, by the joint operation of theſe two principles, he has clearly intimated to us what courſe of action he requires us to purſue. Hence ariſes a plain rule for the direction of our moral conduct. Appetite, paſſion, temptation, prompt us to tranſgreſs this rule; inſtinct, reaſon, intereſt, duty, lead us to conform to it. We have undeniably the power to chuſe which ſide we pleaſe; can either give way to irregular deſires, or controll and over-rule them by ſuperior conſiderations.

ations. Now, if we were to ſuppoſe a being, purpoſely framed in ſuch a manner as to be juſtly accountable for its proceedings, one cannot imagine any conſtitution better adapted to this end, than that of man which we have juſt deſcribed. And when to this you add, that there is a SUPERIOR who has a right to call him to an account, a Superior who gave him a rule to walk by, and to whom it cannot be indifferent whether he tranſgreſſes that rule or not; who can have a doubt, but that God will in ſome other ſtate examine into the uſe he has made of his talents in this?

V. If, from conſidering man, we aſcend to God, the evidence for a future ſtate riſes conſiderably in its importance and ſtrength. If he is poſſeſſed of all thoſe perfections which we uſually and juſtly aſcribe to him, he cannot but approve virtue and abhor vice, and cannot but give the plaineſt indications that he does ſo. His holineſs muſt incline him to love and favour the good, to deteſt and diſcourage the bad. His juſtice muſt naturally lead him to diſtinguiſh between his faithful and his rebellious ſubjects, and to make

made a wide difference in his reſpective treatment of them. His wiſdom muſt prompt and his power enable him to aſſert the dignity of his government, and the authority of his laws, by rewarding thoſe who obſerve, and puniſhing thoſe who tranſgreſs them, in ſuch a manner as to convince the whole world, that every human being ſhall be a gainer by obedience, and a loſer by diſobedience. Now it is a truth univerſally admitted, that the virtuous are *not* always rewarded, nor the vicious puniſhed in this world, agreeably to their deſerts. For although the natural effect of virtue is happineſs, and of vice miſery; and although, in general, theſe effects do follow even here, yet in ſeveral inſtances they moſt evidently do not. We ſometimes ſee men of the very worſt principles and practices going on in a full tide of worldly proſperity, enjoying a large ſhare of every thing this life has to give, riches, honours, rank, power, health of body and chearfulneſs of mind, "coming in no misfortune "like other folk," and not "plagued" with cares and afflictions "like other men *." On the other hand, we may obſerve but too often,

* Pſalm lxxiii. 5.

that

that the beſt and worthieſt of mankind are deſtined from their earlieſt years to ſtruggle with the ſevereſt hardſhips and calamities; with poverty, diſappointments, undutiful children, unkind friends, inveterate enemies, perhaps too with ſtrong paſſions, conſtitutional diſtempers, and a depreſſion of ſpirits, which embitters every enjoyment, and would render the moſt proſperous condition of life inſupportable. Their principles too, and motives, are frequently miſrepreſented, their pureſt and moſt benevolent intentions rendered odious, and thoſe actions which deſerve the applauſe and admiration of mankind, expoſe them perhaps to the groſſeſt obloquy, perſecution, and diſtreſs. When the antient Pagans beheld ſuch inſtances as theſe, they cried out immediately, Where are the gods? Who will ever believe that Providence concerns itſelf in human affairs? Who indeed will believe it, if theſe diſorders are permitted, without any notice taken of them here, or any intention to rectify them hereafter? Is it poſſible to conceive that the wiſe, and righteous and all-powerful Governor of the univerſe, will ſuffer his laws

to

to be trampled under foot, his religion ridiculed and deſpiſed, his faithful ſervants calumniated, inſulted, oppreſſed, and yet never once ſtretch forth his arm to chaſtiſe the bold, triumphant offender, and to recompenſe the injured helpleſs man; to vindicate his reputation in the eyes of all mankind; to make his "righteouſneſs as clear as the light, "his juſt dealing as the noon day;" and to make him ample amends in another life, for the indignities and afflictions he has undergone in this?

That ſuch a retribution will actually take place, we ſhall have ſtill further reaſon to conclude, if we conſider,

VI. Sixthly, that the conſtitution of this world is exactly ſuch as might be expected, if it was to be followed by another.

Suppoſing a future judgment to be a thing certain and allowed, it would then be natural to imagine, that our ſituation here would be ſuch as ſhould be a proper trial and probation, and preparation for that future judgment. Now this, we find, is actually the caſe. This life has every conceivable appearance of being a ſcene of *trial* and *probation*,

bation, intended to fit and train us up, by a proper courſe of exerciſe and diſcipline, for another and a better ſtate of exiſtence. The faculties we are furniſhed with, and the conſtitution of the world we are placed in, preciſely anſwer to this idea, and to no other. Good and evil are placed before us, we have a power of chuſing which we pleaſe, and we know all the conſequences of our choice. A ſyſtem of affections is given us, to excite us to action; a variety of objects is diſtributed around, to work on theſe affections; we have opportunities of indulging, and we have motives for reſtraining, them. We are allured by pleaſure, by intereſt, by power, with no other view but to give proof of our moderation, our integrity, our diſintereſtedneſs. The provocations, injuries, and affronts we conſtantly meet with, are ſo many trials of our temper, forbearance, and placability: the afflictions and calamities of various kinds, which fall to our lot, are only inſtruments in the hands of Providence to exerciſe and improve our patience, fortitude, humility, meekneſs, reſignation. Whatever road of life we take, obſtructions and inconveniences,

niences, cares and difficulties, quickly ſtart up before us, to oppoſe our progreſs, and to render neceſſary the utmoſt exertions of our prudence, circumſpection, induſtry, and perſeverence. Even thoſe irreligious and licentious writings that do ſo much miſchief, give occaſion, at the ſame time, to the friends of religion, to manifeſt their zeal and their abilities in the defence of inſulted decency, and of divine truth. That unequal allotment alſo of worldly bleſſings, which is ſo conſtant a ſubject of diſcontent and complaint, is only a part of the ſame general plan of moral improvement and probationary diſcipline. The wealthy and the indigent, the high and the low, the powerful and the weak, are brought together on the ſame great theatre of action, in order to "provoke one another to good works," and to be the mutual inſtruments of drawing forth the good qualities ſuited to their reſpective ſtations. And in the ſame manner, throughout the whole intercourſe of human life, the colliſion of oppoſite tempers, ſituations, employments, intereſts, paſſions, and purſuits, ſtrikes out of our ſouls thoſe ſparks

of

of virtue, which would otherwiſe, probably, never have been called forth to view *.

It is *a fact*, then, which will admit of no diſpute, that we are actually *tried*, here, almoſt every moment of our lives. We ourſelves, in common ſpeech, call our afflictions *trials*; and we feel, to our coſt, that they are really ſo. If this be granted, it follows that this world is confeſſedly a *ſtate of probation*; the neceſſary conſequence of which is, *a ſtate of retribution*. For, it would be as abſurd to ſuppoſe, that we ſhould be tried, without being rewarded or puniſhed, as that we ſhould be rewarded or puniſhed without giving any proofs that we deſerve either. Theſe two things are correlatives, and mutually infer each other. They are evidently parts of the ſame deſign, the beginning and the end of one wiſe plan of government, which we cannot ſuppoſe to be left imperfect or incomplete, without arraigning the wiſdom and the juſtice of its divine author. It is not his cuſtom to do his work by halves. Whatever he enters upon he will accompliſh. Every thing we know of him, and his

* See Dr. Horbery's Sermons, D. 15.

proceedings,

proceedings, convinces us that he muſt, and he himſelf declares to all the world that he will. "When I begin," ſays he, "I will "alſo make an end *."

VII. Strong as theſe arguments are in themſelves in favour of a future ſtate, it is no ſmall confirmation of them, that there has been a general propenſity and inclination in almoſt all mankind, in every period and every country of the world, to believe the exiſtence of the ſoul after death, and to entertain ſome notions, however imperfect and confuſed, of a future recompence. With regard to the antient Heathens, we have the teſtimony of one of the greateſt men amongſt them †, that there was an univerſal agreement of all people upon the earth, in this great point; and he makes this common conſent one of his chief proofs of the immortality of the ſoul. And from that time to this, amidſt all the diſcoveries that have been made, in every part of the globe, there has never yet, I believe, been found one ſingle nation, however ſavage or barbarous, that has not had ſome apprehenſions or ſuſpicions of another

* 1 Sam. iii, 12. † Cicero. Tuſc. Quæſt. l. i.

ſtate

ſtate of being after this. Even thoſe that are ſaid (though but on very doubtful evidence) to have no notion of a Supreme Being, and to be deſtitute, not only of religious principle, but alſo, in ſome reſpects, of moral ſentiment; yet all concur in believing the exiſtence of the ſoul after death *. It is true, indeed, that there were, among the antient Pagans, ſome ſects of philoſophers who doubted, and others who denied, a future retribution. But the number of theſe, in compariſon of the whole claſs of the common people who believed it, was but ſmall. And nothing ought to be concluded againſt the prevalence of a natural ſentiment, from the fanciful notions of a few conceited ſophiſts; whoſe pride it has ever been to ſhow their ingenuity in combating the plaineſt truths, merely becauſe they *were* plain, and to check the voice of reaſon and of nature, by perplexing ſubtleties, and

* See Locke's Eſſay on Hum. Und. b. i. c. 3. ſ. 9. Robertſon's Hiſt. of America, b. iv. p. 389. Account of Voyages to the Southern Hemiſphere, publiſhed by Hawkeſworth, vol. ii p. 236—239, 4to. 1ſt ed. Tillotſon, ſerm. 174. It is remarkable, that the immortality of the ſoul is believed by all the ſavage tribes of America, from one end of that immenſe continent to the other.

unintelligible refinements. But the human underſtanding left to itſelf, and free from all artificial bias and conſtraint, has a very ſtrong propenſity to the belief of a future judgment. And, although in the notions both of the antient Heathens, and of our modern ſavages, concerning it, there is great obſcurity, uncertainty, and confuſion, with a ſtrange mixture of the moſt abſurd and fabulous imaginations, ſo as to produce little or no effects upon their hearts and lives; yet ſtill they all tend to evince the natural tendency of the human mind to this opinion. And the happy regions of the Thracian *, the ſenſual paradiſe of Mahomet, the elyſium of the Greeks, and the pleaſant mountains of the Indians, all agree in one common principle, the continuation of our being after death, and the diſtribution of certain rewards and puniſhments in another life.

* See Herodotus, l. iv. p 252. ed. Gronov.

SERMON VII.

MATTHEW XXV. 46.

AND THESE SHALL GO AWAY INTO EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT: BUT THE RIGHTEOUS INTO LIFE ETERNAL.

I HAVE now given you a general delineation of the natural and moral evidences for the immortality of the human ſoul, and a ſtate of future recompence; and although each of them, ſingly conſidered, cannot be ſaid to be abſolutely concluſive, yet, when taken collectively, they amount to a very high degree of probability; a degree which would render it the extremity of folly for any one to act (which yet is but too common a caſe with thoſe who reject revelation) as if it was *a decided point*, that there is no ſtate of exiſtence

iſtence but the preſent. How totally oppoſite ſuch an aſſumption would be to every dictate of nature and reaſon, will appear ſtill more evident, if we now very briefly draw together into one point of view the ſeveral arguments that have been ſtated in the two preceding diſcourſes, and then ſee how the caſe ſtands on the two contrary ſuppoſitions, that there *is*, and that there is *not*, a future ſtate of retribution.

In the firſt place, then, if we admit that this life is the whole of our being, what a ſtrange and unaccountable ſcene of things preſents itſelf? We have in that caſe an active principle within us, which has every imaginable appearance of being diſtinct from the body, immaterial, indiſcerptible, and indiſſoluble; yet it turns our to be nothing more than mere matter, endued with qualities diametrically oppoſite to its moſt eſſential properties; it is diſſolved with the body, and loſes all ſenſation, conſciouſneſs, and reflexion for ever in the grave.

We are evidently diſtinguiſhed from, and raiſed above, the brutes, by a variety of aſtoniſhing faculties and powers, which ſeem plainly

plainly deſigned for ſome nobler ſcene of action than this; yet with the brutes we periſh, and all the rich endowments of our minds are waſted on us to no purpoſe.

We are daily making advances both in knowledge and virtue; we have a large field of improvement, both moral and intellectual, before our eyes; yet in the very midſt of our progreſs we are ſtopped ſhort by the hand of death, and never reach that ſtate of perfection, of which we ſeem capable, and which we ardently deſire.

We are formed with ideas and expectations of happineſs, which are everlaſtingly diſappointed; with a thirſt for future fame, of which we ſhall never be conſcious; with a paſſionate longing for immortality, which was never meant to be gratified.

Every part of our conſtitution ſhows that we are accountable for our conduct, every remorſe of conſcience is a proof that we are ſo; there is a ſuperior, who has given us a rule to walk by, who has a right to enquire whether we have conformed to that rule; yet that enquiry is *never* made.

The world in which we are placed is one

continued ſcene of probation. We appear to be ſent into it with no other view, but to ſhew how we can behave, under all that variety of difficult and diſtreſsful circumſtances into which, by one means or other, we are continually thrown. Yet our behaviour paſſes totally unregarded. We perform *our* parts, but the judge who has tried us forgets to perform *his*. Our trial is finiſhed, and no conſequences follow; no ſentence is pronounced; we are neither rewarded for having acted well, nor puniſhed for having acted ill.

We conceive ourſelves to be the ſubjects of an Almighty governor, who has given us a ſyſtem of laws for our direction. Yet he appears to be perfectly indifferent whether we obſerve thoſe laws or not. His friends and his enemies fare frequently alike. Nay, the former are often puniſhed with the heavieſt afflictions, and the latter rewarded with every earthly enjoyment.

There has, in fine, been, from the firſt ages of the world down to this moment, an almoſt univerſal agreement and conſent of all mankind in the belief or apprehenſion of a future ſtate of exiſtence; and yet this turns out to

be

be nothing more than a deluſive imagination, though impreſſed ſo deeply by nature itſelf on every human breaſt.

What now can be imagined more ſtrange and inexplicable; more abſurd and inconſiſtent; more replete with diſorder, confuſion, and miſery; more unworthy the wiſdom, the juſtice, the goodneſs of the Supreme Being, than the frame of man, and the conſtitution of the world, according to the repreſentation here given them?

But when, on the other hand, you extend your view beyond the limits of *this* life, and take in the conſideration of *another*, what an alteration does this inſtantly make in the appearance of every thing within and without us! The miſt that before reſted on the face of the earth vaniſhes away, and diſcovers a ſcene of the utmoſt order, beauty, harmony, and regularity. The moment our relation to another world is known, all perplexity is cleared up, and all inconſiſtencies are reconciled.

We then find ourſelves compoſed of two parts, a material body and an immaterial ſoul; and the ſeemingly incompatible properties of matter and ſpirit, inſtead of being intermixed

and incorporated together in one ſubſtance, have each their diſtinct province aſſigned them in our compound frame, and reſide in ſeparate ſubſtances ſuited to their reſpective natures. But though different from each other, they are cloſely united together. By this union we are allied both to the viſible and inviſible, the material and the ſpiritual world, and ſtand as it were on the confines of each. And when the body reverts to earth, the ſoul betakes itſelf to that world of immortal ſpirits to which it belongs.

Thoſe extraordinary faculties and powers of the human mind, which ſeem far beyond what the uſes of this ſhort life require, become highly proper and ſuitable to a being that is deſigned for eternity, and are nothing more than what is neceſſary to prepare it for that heavenly country which is its proper home, and is to be its everlaſting abode. There they will have full room to open and expand themſelves, and to diſplay a degree of vigour and activity not to be attained in the preſent life. There they will go on improving to all eternity, and acquire that ſtate of perfection to which they are always tending, but have not time in this world to arrive at.

When

When once it is certain that we are to give an account of ourſelves hereafter, there is then a plain reaſon why we are free agents; why a rule is given us to walk by; why we have a power of deviating from, or conforming to it; why, in ſhort, we undergo a previous examination at the bar of our conſciences before we appear at the tribunal of our great judge.

Our earneſt thirſt of fame, of happineſs, of immortality, will, on the ſuppoſition of a future exiſtence, ſerve ſome better purpoſe than to diſappoint and diſtreſs us. They are all natural deſires, with objects that correſpond to them; and will each of them meet with that gratification in another life, which they in vain look for in this.

Nay, even that unequal diſtribution of good and evil, at which we are ſo apt to repine, and thoſe heavy afflictions that ſometimes preſs ſo hard upon the beſt of men, are all capable of an eaſy ſolution, the moment we take a future life into the account. This world is then only part of a ſyſtem. It was never intended for a ſtate of *retribution*, but of *probation*. Here we are only *tried*;

tried; it is hereafter we are to be *rewarded*, or *punished*. The evils we meet with, conſidered in this light, aſſume a very different aſpect. They are wiſe, and even benevolent proviſions, to put our virtues to the proof; to produce in us that temper, and thoſe diſpoſitions, which are neceſſary preparations for immortal glory.

Thus does the ſuppoſition of a future ſtate clear up every difficulty, and diſperſe the darkneſs that otherwiſe hangs over this part of God's creation. With this light of immortality held up before us, we can find our way through the obſcureſt parts of God's moral government, and give a ſatisfactory account of his dealings with mankind. It is therefore a moſt convincing proof of the reality of a future ſtate, that it anſwers ſo many excellent purpoſes, and ſeems ſo indiſpenſably neceſſary to give harmony and regularity to the deſigns of the Almighty in the formation of this globe, and its inhabitants, and to be the finiſhing and winding up of one uniform and conſiſtent plan of divine conduct. For, as *in the material world*, when we find that the principle of gravitation,

tion, upon being applied to the ſeveral parts of the univerſe, explains, in the juſteſt and moſt elegant manner, the ſituations, appearances, and influences of the heavenly bodies, and even accounts for all the ſeeming irregularity and eccentricity of their motions, we make no ſcruple of allowing the exiſtence and the operation of ſuch a power: ſo in *the moral ſyſtem*, when we ſee that the admiſſion of another life gives an eaſy ſolution of the moſt ſurprizing and otherwiſe unaccountable phenomena; and is, as it were, *a maſter key*, that unlocks every intricacy, and opens to us the great plan of Providence in the adminiſtration of human affairs; we can no longer, without doing violence to every rule of juſt reaſoning, refuſe out aſſent to the truth and reality of ſuch a ſtate.

From this collective view of thoſe arguments for a future exiſtence, which are the reſult of our own reſearches on the ſubject, it appears, that, when combined together, they form a very ſtrong body of evidence in ſupport of that great truth.

This evidence has, indeed, as I before obſerved, been repreſented by ſome to be ſo forcible

forcible and decisive, as to render the aid of Revelation on this point totally unnecessary. But so far is this from being the case, that *the very clearness* with which we are now enabled to deduce the reality of a future retribution from the principles of reason, will itself lead us to a very convincing proof of the absolute necessity there was for some superior light to instruct and direct mankind, in this and other doctrines of the utmost importance to their present and future happiness.

It has been shown, that in every age and nation of the world, the belief of another life after this has been strongly and universally impressed on the minds of the common people. It has been shown also, that besides these natural impressions, we may, by a proper exertion of our reasoning powers, and by considering the question attentively in various points of view, draw together a great number of strong presumptive proofs in support of the same important truth. From these premises one should naturally conclude, that all the great sages of antiquity, those wise, and venerable, and learned men, who

cultivated

cultivated letters and philoſophy with ſo much reputation and ſucceſs, who were the guides and luminaries, the inſtructors and legiſlators of the Heathen world, would have been among the very firſt to embrace the idea of a future retribution; to ſee more clearly, and feel more forcibly, than any others, the united teſtimony of nature and of reaſon in its behalf; to rectify the miſtakes and refine the groſs conceptions of the vulgar concerning it; to clear away the rubbiſh with which the fictions of the poets, and the ſuperſtitions of the people, had clogged and corrupted the genuine ſentiments of nature; and, by delivering, in their writings, a clear, conſiſtent, rational, methodical expoſition of this great truth, to eſtabliſh it for ever in the minds of men, and convert an article of popular belief into a fundamental tenet of the reigning philoſophy. This, I ſay, it was natural to expect from them; and had they done this, there might have been ſome pretence for aſſerting that there was no need for any further light on this ſubject. But what is the real ſtate of the caſe? Look into the writings of the antient philoſophers, reſpecting a future retribution,

retribution, and (with few if any exceptions) you ſee nothing but embarraſſment, confuſion, inconſiſtence, and contradiction. In one page you will find them expatiating with apparent ſatisfaction on the arguments then commonly produced for the immortality of the ſoul, and a ſtate of recompence hereafter; anſwering the ſeveral objections to them with great acuteneſs, illuſtrating them with wonderful ingenuity and art, adorning them with all the charms of their eloquence, declaring their entire aſſent to them, and proteſting that nothing ſhould ever wreſt from them this delightful perſuaſion, the very joy and comfort of their ſouls. In another page the ſcene is totally changed. They unſay almoſt every thing they had ſaid before. They doubt, they fluctuate, they deſpond, they diſbelieve *. They laugh at the popu-

* Neſcio quomodo, dum lego, aſſentior; cum poſui librum & mecum ipſe de immortalitate animorum cæpi cogitare, aſſenſio omnis illabitur. *Tuſc. Quæſt. l.* i. *c.* 11. And again, Dubitans, circumſpectans, hæſitans, multa adverſa † revertens, tanquam ratis in mari immenſo noſtra vehitur Oratio. c. 30. A moſt lively picture of the fluctuation and uncertainty of their minds on this ſubject.

† Reverens. *Davis.*

lar

lar notions of future puniſhments and rewards, but they ſubſtitute nothing more rational or ſatisfactory in their room. Nay, what is ſtill more extraordinary, although they all acknowledged, that the belief of a future life and a future recompence, was an univerſal principle of nature; that it was what all mankind with one voice concurred and agreed in; yet, notwithſtanding this, many of them ſeem even *to have taken pains* to ſtifle this voice of nature within them; and conſidered it as a *victory* of the greateſt importance, to ſubdue and extinguiſh thoſe notices of a future judgment, which, in deſpite of themſelves, they found ſpringing up within their own breaſts *.

What now ſhall we ſay to this remarkable fact, this ſingular phenomenon in the hiſtory of the human mind? Can there poſſibly be a more ſtriking proof that Philoſophy, divine philoſophy (as it is ſometimes called) which is now frequently ſet up as the rival of Revelation, was in general utterly unable to lead men to the acknowledgment of one of

* See Virgil Georg. ii v. 490. Lucretius, l. i. v. 80. and l. iii. v. 37; and Tuſc. Quæſt. l. i. c. 21.

the

the plaineſt, and moſt important, and moſt *rational* truths in natural religion; that, inſtead of aiding the ſuggeſtions of nature, and confirming the dictates of reaſon, it perplexed the one, and reſiſted the other; and that ſome of the greateſt and moſt learned men of antiquity, exactly anſwered the deſcription given of them in ſcripture; "profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools*?" Though ſuperior to all the reſt of the world in philoſophy and literary attainments, yet in ſome great points of religious knowledge, they ſunk frequently even below the meaneſt of the people. They ran counter, in ſhort, to the common ſenſe of mankind, and philoſophized themſelves out of truths, which we *now* ſee, and which the bulk of men even *then* ſaw, to be conformable to the moſt natural ſentiments of the human mind.

It was therefore highly proper, it was indiſpenſably neceſſary, that God himſelf ſhould interpoſe in a caſe of ſuch infinite importance; that Revelation ſhould come to the aid of nature and of reaſon; ſhould reſtore them to their original force and power; ſhould reſcue

* Rom. i. 22.

them

them out of the hands of *ſcience, falſely ſo called* *, whoſe province, in matters of religion, it has commonly been to *ſpoil* mankind with *vain deceit* †, and to lead thoſe wrong, whom their own good ſenſe and uncorrupted judgment would probably have directed right.

The truth is (but it is a truth which the Freethinker has always been very unwilling to admit) that Chriſtianity has, in fact, contributed very greatly to that improved ſtate, and advantageous point of view, in which natural religion now appears to us; and many of thoſe who reject the *authority* of the Goſpel, are, without knowing it perhaps, moſt certainly without owning it, made wiſer by its *diſcoveries*. In the preſent inſtance, particularly, the divine light of revelation has thrown a brightneſs on the diſtant proſpect beyond the grave, which has brought out to view, and rendered more diſtinct, even *to the eye of reaſon*, a variety of obſcure points, which were before inviſible to her unaſſiſted ſight. Hence the remarkable difference there is between the reaſonings of the ancients

* 1 Tim. vi. 20. † Col. ii. 8.

and the moderns on this queſtion. Hence the force, the clearneſs, the deciſion, that appear in the one; the perplexity, feebleneſs, and uncertainty that diſtinguiſh the other. Of this, no other probable cauſe can be aſſigned, than that the Pagan Philoſopher had nothing but the *wiſdom of this world* to guide his reſearches into a future ſtate; whereas the Chriſtian, and even the Deiſtical philoſopher, comes to the enquiry with his mind full of thoſe ideas, which an early acquaintance with Revelation has imperceptibly impreſſed upon him. To explore a road, which is entirely unknown to us, by a feeble and a dubious light, is a totally different thing from endeavouring to trace it out again by the ſame light, after it has been once ſhown to us in broad and open day. The former is the caſe of the ancients, and the latter of the moderns, in reſpect to a future life.

But beſides the benefit derived from Revelation in this reſpect, there are other advantages, of the utmoſt importance, which the Goſpel doctrine of LIFE AND IMMORTALITY brings along with it; and which give its evidences an infinite ſuperiority over thoſe of natural religion.

The

The principal of these are,

1st. The *certainty and authority* of its proofs.

2dly. Their *plainness and perspicuity.*

3dly. The *nature and duration* of its rewards.

1st. The certainty and authority of its proofs.

After giving every possible advantage to the natural evidences of a future state, it must be acknowledged, that they amount to nothing more than *great probability.* They cannot afford that *demonstrative certainty* and *assurance* of this great truth, which is essentially necessary for the complete satisfaction and comfort of the mind, in so very interesting a point, and for rendering this doctrine a motive of sufficient weight to influence the hearts and regulate the conduct of mankind. Neither of these effects could nature and reason (universally as they had diffused the belief of a future existence) produce in the heathen world. This the writings of their philosophers, and the manners of their people, incontestibly prove. To the Gospel alone we are indebted, for the *entire removal* of all doubt and uncertainty on this subject; for

raiſing hope into confidence, and a mere *ſpeculative notion* into a vital and moſt powerful *principle of action*. It is evident, that nothing leſs than an expreſs revelation from God himſelf could do this. He who firſt brought us into being, can alone give us *authentic information*, how long that being ſhall be continued, and in what manner he will diſpoſe of us hereafter. This information he *has* given us in the Scriptures, and has given it in ſuch plain, and explicit, and awful terms, as muſt carry conviction to every unprejudiced underſtanding, and leave the deepeſt and moſt uſeful impreſſions on every well-diſpoſed mind.

2. Another benefit we derive from Revelation on this head, is the *plainneſs and perſpicuity* of its proofs. A great part of thoſe evidences of a future ſtate, which reaſon furniſhes, require a conſiderable degree of attention and conſideration, and are therefore better adapted to men of a contemplative, philoſophic turn, than to the generality of mankind, who have neither leiſure, nor inclination, nor abilities, to enter into long and abſtruſe diſquiſitions on this or any other queſtion of importance.

But

But the arguments of the Goſpel are (and thanks be to God that they are) of quite a different ſort. It ſets before us the declarations of God himſelf, "That there ſhall be a "reſurrection of the dead, both of the juſt and "the unjuſt; that God hath appointed a day "in which he will judge the world in righ-"teouſneſs; and that we muſt all appear "before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that "every one may receive the things done in "his body, according to that he hath done, "whether it be good or bad*." To convince us, not only of the poſſibility, but of the certainty, of ſo wonderful an event, it appeal to *facts*; it ſhews us Chriſt himſelf, "riſen from the dead, and become the firſt "fruits of them that ſlept." It afterwards exhibits him to us in a ſtill more illuſtrious point of view. It repreſents him as "com-"ing in the clouds of heaven, with power "and great glory, to judge the world. The "trumpet ſounds, and the dead, both ſmall "and great, are raiſed up; and before him "are gathered" (what an awful and aſtoniſhing ſpectacle!) "ALL THE NATIONS OF

* Acts xxiv 15; xvii. 3; 2 Cor. v. 10.

" THE EARTH; and he ſeparates them one " from another, as a ſhepherd divideth his " ſheep from the goats. The books are " opened, and he judgeth them out of the " things that are written in the books, ac- " cording to their works; and the wicked " go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but " the righteous into life eternal *."

Theſe are not profound and curious ſpeculations, beyond the reach of common apprehenſions. They are *plain facts, and ſolemn denunciations from the very higheſt authority*, ſpeaking with equal force to all ranks of men, and, by their ſimplicity and dignity, adapted no leſs to the capacity of the illiterate than to the moſt exalted conceptions of the learned. Hence it has come to paſs, that theſe divine truths being preached to the *poor* as well as to the *rich* (a circumſtance peculiar to the Goſpel, and therefore mentioned as one of its diſtinguiſhing characteriſtics †) have conveyed to the very humbleſt diſciples of Chriſt far clearer ideas, and juſter notions, of a future

* Matth. xxiv. 30. 1 Cor. xv. 52. Rev. xx. 12. Matth. xxv. 32, 46.

† Matth. xi. 5.

ſtate,

ſtate, than were to be found in all the celebrated ſchools of philoſophy at Athens or at Rome.

3. But there is ſtill another point, and that of the utmoſt conſequence, reſpecting a future ſtate, in which the infinite ſuperiority of Revelation to the light of nature muſt evidently appear. And that is, the *nature and duration* of the rewards which it promiſes.

The utmoſt that reaſon can pretend to is, to prove that we ſhall ſurvive the grave; that we ſhall exiſt in another world; and that there the wicked ſhall be puniſhed according to their demerits, and the good rewarded with ſuch a degree of happineſs, as their virtues and their ſufferings here ſeem in juſtice to require. This is all that is neceſſary to vindicate the ways of God to mankind; and therefore beyond this, our own reaſoning powers, and our natural expectations, cannot go. Indeed the very beſt and wiſeſt of the Pagan philoſophers did not go near ſo far as this. Some of them, although they believed the exiſtence of the ſoul *after death*, yet denied that it would exiſt *for ever* *. Others admitted its

* Stoici – *diu* manſuros aiunt animos, *ſemper* negant. Tuſc. Quæſt. l. i. c. 31.

eternity, but did not allow that it paſſed into a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. They ſuppoſed it would be reſolved into the UNIVERSAL SPIRIT from which it was originally detached. And even of thoſe who acknowledged a future retribution, many aſſerted that the puniſhments only were eternal, the rewards of a *temporary* nature *. And indeed it muſt be owned, that there are no principles of natural religion, which give us any ground to hope for a ſtate of felicity hereafter, unmixed and perfect in its kind, beyond all conception great, and in duration endleſs. It is from Revelation only we learn that *ſuch* ſhall be the rewards "of the righ-
"teous; that God ſhall wipe away all tears
"from their eyes, and there ſhall be no
"more death, neither ſorrow nor crying;
"that he will give them glory, and honour,
"and immortality; that they ſhall go away
"into life eternal, and enter into the joy of
"their Lord; that in his preſence there is
"fullneſs of joy, and pleaſures for evermore;
"that eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nei-
"ther have entered into the heart of man,

* Div. Leg. vol. ii. p. 199.

"the

" the good things which God hath prepared " for them that love him *."

In theſe, and many other paſſages of the ſame nature, we are expreſsly aſſured, that both our exiſtence and our happineſs hereafter ſhall be, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word, *everlaſting*. This, none but God himſelf could promiſe, or when promiſed, fulfil. It is more than the utmoſt ſagacity of human reaſon could diſcover, more than the utmoſt perfection of human virtue could claim. ETERNAL LIFE, therefore, is conſtantly and juſtly repreſented in Scripture as the GIFT, the FREE GIFT of God, through Jeſus Chriſt †; and, were it on this account only, it might be truly ſaid, " that life and " immortality were brought to light through " the Goſpel ‡."

Mark then, I entreat you, in concluſion, mark the difference between the *wiſdom of man*, and *that wiſdom which is from above*. The former, as you have juſt ſeen in the in-

* Rev. vii. 27; Rom. ii. 7; Matth. xxv. 21. 36; Pſalm xvi. 11; 1 Cor. ii. 9.

† Rom. v. 18; vi. 23.

‡ 2 Tim. i. 10.

ſtance

ſtance of the antient philoſophers, does violence, by its falſe refinements in ſome of the moſt eſſential truths of religion, to the cleareſt principles of nature and of reaſon. The latter illuſtrates, corroborates, improves, and perfects them. This has been ſhown to be the caſe in one very important doctrine, and might be ſhown in more. Our divine maſter is indeed, in every inſtance, and eſpecially in that we have been now conſidering, "THE "WAY, THE TRUTH, and THE LIFE *;" and whenever we are tempted to deſert this heavenly guide, and to *go away*, either to philoſophy or to any other inſtructor, we have our anſwer ready prepared for us, in that noble and affecting reply of St. Peter to Jeſus, "Lord, to whom ſhall we go? Thou haſt "the words of ETERNAL LIFE; and we "believe and are ſure that thou art THAT "CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING "GOD †.

* John xiv. 6. † Ib. vi. 69.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

TITUS ii. 6.

YOUNG MEN LIKEWISE EXHORT TO BE SOBER-MINDED.

THERE is ſcarce any ſubject of exhortation ſo neceſſary to youth, as that which is here recommended by St. Paul. Alacrity, emulation, benevolence, frankneſs, generoſity, are almoſt the natural growth of that enchanting age. What it chiefly wants is ſomething to regulate and temper theſe good qualities; and to do that is the province of SOBER-MINDEDNESS. Let not the young man be frighted with the ſolemnity of the name. It implies nothing unſuitable to his years, or inconſiſtent with his moſt valuable enjoyments. It tends to improve his chearfulneſs, though it may reſtrain his extravagances;

vagances; to give the warmth of his imagination and the vigour of his underſtanding a right direction; to ſingle out ſuch enterprizes for him as are worthy of his natural vivacity and ardour; to prevent his talents and induſtry from becoming miſchievous, his pleaſures from proving ruinous, and to render his purſuits ſubſervient, not only to preſent delight, but to ſubſtantial and permanent happineſs.

It is evident that there is both a moral and an intellectual ſobriety; a modeſt reſerve, a rational guard upon ourſelves, not only in acting, but in thinking: and the original word σωφρονειν, which we tranſlate, *to be ſober-minded*, includes both theſe kinds of ſobriety. Its primary ſignification is, to be wiſe, prudent, temperate; and this wiſdom chiefly conſiſts,

I. In the government of the paſſions.

II. In the government of the underſtanding.

Firſt then, we are commanded to teach young men the government of their paſſions. "To flee youthful luſts *," is an apoſto-

* 2 Tim. ii. 22.

lical

lical admonition, not very grateful, perhaps, to youthful ears; but ſo indiſpenſably requiſite both to temporal and eternal happineſs, that it muſt, at all events, and by every poſſible means, be inculcated and enforced. It comprehends all thoſe irregular deſires, to the influence of which is owing much the greateſt part of the vice and miſery that deſolate mankind. "From "whence come wars and fightings among "you? Come they not hence, even of your "luſts, which war in your members †?" From whence (may we add) come murders, frauds, breaches of truſt, violations of the marriage-bed, the ruin of unguarded and unſuſpecting innocence, the diſtreſs and diſgrace of worthy families, the corruption and ſubverſion of whole kingdoms? Come they not all from one and the ſame impure ſource, from the violence of headſtrong and unruly appetites, which, in purſuit of ſome unlawful object, burſt through all reſtraints of decency, juſtice, honour, humanity, gratitude; and throw down every barrier, however ſacred, that ſtands between them and the attaintment of their end?

† James iv. 1.

The

The paſſions, then, muſt be governed, or they will govern us; and, like all other ſlaves when in poſſeſſion of power, will become the moſt ſavage and mercileſs of tyrants. But at what time ſhall we *begin* to govern them? The very moment, ſurely, that *they begin* to raiſe commotions in the ſoul: the moment we know, from conſcience, from reaſon, from revelation, that the gratifications they require ought not to be granted. This period may in ſome be earlier than in others; but it can ſcarce ever be later in any, than the uſual time of being tranſplanted to this place*. Here then you ought at once to enter on the diſpoſition of your ſtudies and the regulation of your deſires. There is no danger of your undertaking ſo arduous and neceſſary a taſk too ſoon. If you hope to acquire any authority over your paſſions, you muſt inure them to early obedience, and bend them to the yoke while they are yet pliant and flexible. It will, even then, indeed be a difficult taſk. But what is there worth having that is to be obtained without difficulties? They are inſeparable from a ſtate of probation, and

* Cambridge; where this ſermon was preached. See the table of contents.

youth

youth is the proper time for ſubduing them. In other inſtances, the obſtructions you encounter ſerve only to ſtimulate your induſtry and animate your efforts; and why then not in this? Be the diſcouragements what they will, the conſequence is not, that you ought to deſiſt from the attempt, but, that you ought to begin the ſooner. For theſe obſtacles, inſtead of leſſening, will grow upon your hands: every moment you delay, will but rivet your chains the faſter, and give habit time to ſtrengthen appetite. Beſides, you have here advantages and helps towards this great work, which no other place, no other time, can afford. The retirement you enjoy from the great world, and the admirable order here eſtabliſhed, were purpoſely meant to aſſiſt you in the ſcience of ſelf-government, no leſs than in the acquiſition of learning. The excluſion of all the moſt dangerous allurements to vice, of thoſe amuſements which excite the ſofter paſſions, of thoſe cares and conteſts which provoke more violent emotion; the frequent and ſtated returns of divine worſhip, the exact diſtribution of time, the allotment of almoſt every hour to its proper employment, the neceſſity of a modeſt and uniform

form apparel, of temperate and public meals, of repoſing at night under one common roof; all theſe things are moſt wiſely calculated to keep the attention fixed on innocent and uſeful objects, to curb the imagination, to reſtrain extravagant deſires, to induce habits of modeſty, humility, temperance, frugality, obedience; in one word, SOBER-MINDEDNESS. It may be thought, perhaps, that the regulation of dreſs, and diet, and amuſement, and ſuch-like trifles, are below the notice of a great and learned body. But it is a miſtake to think ſo. Order and regularity in the minuteſt points, tend to introduce them, nay, are neceſſary to introduce them, in the greateſt; accuſtom the mind to reſtraint, and inſenſibly form it to the practice of vigilance and ſelf-denial.

It is, in ſhort, the excellent diſcipline eſtabliſhed in theſe ſocieties, which is their greateſt glory, and muſt be their firmeſt ſupport. It is what moſt eminently diſtinguiſhes the univerſities of Great Britain from all others in the world, and juſtly renders them the admiration of every one whom curioſity draws from other climes to viſit them. This

diſtinction,

diſtinction, then, ſo honourable to ourſelves, ſo beneficial to thoſe we educate, it is of the utmoſt importance for us to maintain with inflexible firmneſs and reſolution. We cannot, without ſome hazard, give up the ſmalleſt article of good government: but in thoſe points which relate immediately to morals, the leaſt relaxation muſt tend to ſubvert our credit, and even endanger our exiſtence. In a place ſacred to virtue and religion, no ſpecies of vice, no kind of temptation to vice, can, for one moment, be tolerated or connived at. We ſhall not be allowed to ſay in our defence, that we only keep pace with the manners of the age: this will be deemed our reproach rather than our excuſe. It is *our* buſineſs, not meanly "to follow a mul-"titude to do evil;" not to *conform* to the corrupt faſhions of the times, but by our precepts and our example to fortify our young diſciples *againſt* them. It is evident that the world expects from us a more than ordinary degree of watchfulneſs over our conduct. It expects that the correction of national abuſes ſhould begin here. And the expectation is not unreaſonable. Whence

ſhould general reformation take its riſe, if ever it riſe at all, but from the two great ſources of Learning and Religion? We are as lights ſet on an eminence, ſhining at preſent, indeed, *in a dark place*, in the midſt of luxury and profuſion, but able, perhaps, by degrees, to diſperſe the gloom of the ſurrounding proſpect. If we cannot check the exceſſes of the preſent age, we may at leaſt cruſh future extravagancies in their birth, by infuſing into our youth thoſe leſſons and thoſe habits of frugality, abſtinence, and ſober-mindedneſs, which are eſſential to the welfare both of the univerſities and of the ſtate.

II. The other great branch of ſobermindedneſs, which we muſt recommend to young men, is the government of the underſtanding.

There is a great variety of intellectual errors, into which, without a proper conduct of the underſtanding, or, in other words, without a ſound and well-cultivated judgment, the young ſtudent will be extremely apt to fall. Of theſe I ſhall ſingle out only one, againſt which it ſeems at preſent more peculiarly neceſſary to caution him, and that is

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an inſatiable thirſt for *novelty*. The Athenians, we know, in the decline of their ſtate, "ſpent their time in nothing elſe but either "to tell or to hear ſome new thing *." In this reſpect, whatever may be the caſe in others, we fall very little ſhort of that elegant but corrupt people; and the greater part of thoſe who write for popular applauſe, are determined at any rate to gratify this extravagant paſſion. For this purpoſe they hold it neceſſary to depart as far as poſſible from the plain direct road of nature, ſimplicity, and good ſenſe; which being unfortunately preoccupied by thoſe great maſters of compoſition, the antients, and ſuch of the moderns as have trod in their ſteps, leave them no room in that walk for the diſtinction at which they aim. They ſtrike out therefore into untried and pathleſs regions, and there ſtrain every nerve, and put in practice every artifice, to catch the attention and excite the wonder of mankind. Hence all thoſe various corruptions in literature, thoſe affectations of ſingularity and orginality, thoſe quaint conceits, abrupt digreſſions, indecent alluſions, wild ſtarts of fancy, and every other obliquity

* Acts xvii. 21.

of a diſtorted wit, which vitiate the taſte, corrupt the morals, and pervert the principles of young and injudicious readers *. Hence too all thoſe late profound diſcoveries—that to give youth a religious education is to fill them with bigotry and prejudice; that the right way to teach morality is to make vice appear amiable; that true wiſdom and philoſophy conſiſt in doubting of every thing, in combating all received opinions, and confounding the moſt obvious dictates of common ſenſe in the inexplicable mazes of metaphyſical refinement; that all eſtabliſhments, civil or religious, are iniquitous and pernicious uſurpations on the liberties of mankind; that the only way to be a good Chriſtian, is to diſbelieve above one half of the Goſpel; that piety and ſelf-government are duties not worth a wiſe man's notice; that benevolence is the ſum of all virtue and all religion, and that one great proof of our benevolence is to ſet mankind afloat in uncer-

* Certain eccentric compoſitions are here alluded to, which were at that time (1767) much in faſhion, and have as uſual produced a multitude of wretched imitators of a ſpecies of writing which does not admit, and is not worthy, of imitation.

tainty,

tainty, and make them as uneaſy and hopeleſs as we can.

When theſe poſitions are thus collected together, and propoſed without ſophiſtry or diſguiſe to a plain underſtanding, they appear more like the feveriſh dreams of a diſordered imagination, than the ſerious aſſertions of ſober and reaſonable men. And yet they are notoriouſly nothing more than a faithful compendium of what ſome of the moſt favourite authors of the age, both foreign and domeſtic, avowedly recommend to us, as maxims of wiſdom and rules of conduct. Were they actually adopted as ſuch by the bulk of the people, it is eaſy to ſee what wild work they would make in ſociety. In effect, the recent opportunities we have had in this iſland, of obſerving the ridiculous extravagances reſulting from thoſe principles, and the infinite abſurdities of a practice formed on the too-prevailing ſyſtem of modern ethics, are abundantly ſufficient to convince us of their utter unfitneſs for the uſes and the duties of common life, as well as for the purpoſes of the life to come. It behoves us, therefore, to guard our young diſciples, with

the utmoſt care, againſt this viſionary fantaſtic philoſophy, which owes its birth to the concurrence of much vanity and little judgment with a warm and ungoverned imagination, and is ſtudious to recommend itſelf by the united charms of novelty and eloquence. Theſe are indeed to young minds attractions almoſt irreſiſtible; but yet a right culture of the underſtanding will be an effectual ſecurity againſt them; and, with ſome few improvements, there cannot, perhaps, be a better for that purpoſe, than the courſe of ſtudy marked out by the wiſdom of the univerſity to the youth of this place; and which, to their praiſe be it ſpoken, is purſued by them with aſtoniſhing application and ſucceſs.

That judicious mixture of polite letters and philoſophic ſciences, which is the neceſſary preparative for their firſt degree, is admirably calculated at once to refine their taſte, enlarge their notions, and exalt their minds. By beginning in the firſt place with CLASSICAL LITERATURE, and improving the acquaintance they have already made with the beſt and pureſt writers of antiquity, they will inſenſibly acquire a reliſh for true ſimplicity

plicity and chaſtity of compoſition. They will learn ſtrength and clearneſs of conception, accuracy, order, correctneſs, copiouſneſs, elegance and dignity of expreſſion. They will find that the moſt juſtly approved writers of our own times have formed themſelves on thoſe great models; and (as one, who well underſtood what originality was, expreſſes himſelf) they will perceive that, "a true genius is not any bold writer, who breaks through the rules of decency to diſtinguiſh himſelf by the ſingularity of his opinions; but one who, on a deſerving ſubject, is able to open new ſcenes, and diſcover a vein of true and noble thinking, which never entered into any imagination before; every ſtroke of whoſe pen is worth all the paper blotted by hundreds of others in the whole courſe of their lives *."

The cultivation of LOGIC, at the ſame time, and the moſt uſeful and practical branches of the MATHEMATICS (which are excellent examples of ſevere reaſoning and ſagacious inveſtigation) will alſo be of ſingular

* Swift's propoſal for correcting, improving, and aſcertaining the Engliſh tongue; in a letter to Lord Oxford.

uſe in preſerving our youth from error, in every ſubſequent part of knowledge. It will teach them to arrange, and methodize, and connect their thoughts; to examine the arguments of others with a nice and critical penetration; to purſue them through a long concatenation of dependent propoſitions, and diſcover whether any link in the chain of proofs be wanting; to diſtinguiſh ſenſe from ſound, ideas from words, haſty and peremptory deciſions from juſt and legitimate concluſions. It will put them upon their guard againſt bold and novel opinions, eſpecially if addreſſed to the imagination by ſtrokes of wit, or to the heart by affecting deſcriptions, rather than to the underſtanding by ſound and concluſive reaſoning. By keeping their judgment in conſtant exerciſe, it will improve and ſtrengthen that excellent and uſeful, but too little regarded, faculty. It will inſtruct them in the ſeveral degrees of certainty, and the various kinds of proof, of which different ſubjects are capable; the juſt grounds of doubt, aſſent, or diſbelief; the true limits and extent of the human underſtanding; that preciſe point, in ſhort, at

which

which our curioſity ought to ſtop, and beyond which, all is uncertainty, conjecture, and darkneſs.

The firſt ſuitable employment of our minds, thus improved, is to turn their new-acquired ſagacity inward upon themſelves, and, with the help of the beſt ethical writers, antient and modern, to make a careful inſpection into their own wonderful frame and conſtitution. This leads us into the province of MORAL PHILOSOPHY; by the aid of which we ſhall perceive more diſtinctly the nature and true value of the rational, the ſocial, the ſelfiſh, principles of action within us, and what tenour of life they point out to us as beſt accommodated to our circumſtances, and calculated to produce the moſt ſubſtantial happineſs. By leading young people early into ſuch enquiries as theſe, many things may be taught them of unſpeakable uſe to themſelves and others, and many admirable rules ſuggeſted to them for the regulation of their future conduct.

After this ſurvey of the *moral*, it is time to contemplate the wonders of the *material* world. The great volume of nature is therefore

fore now thrown open to the ſtudent. He is led by the hand of ſcience through all the uſeful and ſublime diſcoveries of the NEWTONIAN PHILOSOPHY. He is made acquainted with the ſeveral properties of matter, in all its various forms and modifications, on this globe of earth; and furniſhed with principles for increaſing and improving the conveniences of common life. He is then tranſported to diſtant planets and other worlds. He inveſtigates the laws that govern their revolutions, and the forces that retain them in their orbits. "He conſiders "the ſun when it ſhineth, and the moon "walking in brightneſs *," and all the hoſt of heaven ſtanding in array before him: and ſometimes extends his thoughts even beyond theſe, beyond the reach of ſenſe, to new firmaments and new lights, riſing up to his imagination, in endleſs ſucceſſion, through the regions of unbounded ſpace. But ſo far is he from being "ſecretly enticed †," as ſome have formerly been, to convert his admiration of theſe glorious luminaries, into an impious adoration of them, that they ſerve

* Job xxxi. 26. † Ib. xxxi. 27.

only,

only, as they naturally ſhould do, to carry him up to their great Author, even the "Father of lights*." He ſees the DEITY plainly written in theſe ſplendid characters, he derives from them the juſteſt and moſt magnificent conceptions of his nature and attributes, and thus lays a firm and ſolid foundation for the ſuperſtructure of NATURAL RELIGION, which forms the next great object of his attention.

In the purſuit of this moſt important branch of knowledge, he will perceive how far the powers of nature and of reaſon are capable of going, in eſtabliſhing thoſe great fundamental truths of religion; the being of a God, a ſuperintending Providence, a moral government of the univerſe, the eſſential and unalterable difference between right and wrong, virtue and vice, a future ſtate of exiſtence and of retribution, and the obligations which ſuch a ſyſtem of things impoſes on every rational agent to conform his conduct to the will of his Creator; as far as it can be collected from the conſtitution of the world, from the genuine ſentiments of nature, the

* James i. 17.

faculties

faculties of the human mind, and the attributes of the Deity himſelf. In theſe reſearches, he will find light enough to determine an honeſt and unprejudiced mind to the belief of all the above-mentioned momentous doctrines, and obſcurity enough to make him earneſtly wiſh for clearer evidence, and more authentic information, on ſubjects of ſuch infinite importance.

After theſe enquiries, the ſtudent's next advance is to METAPHYSICAL SPECULATIONS. Theſe, it muſt be owned, have been but too often employed in undermining and ſubverting the cleareſt principles of morality and religion. But when carried only to a certain point, under the direction of a ſound judgment and an honeſt mind, ſome knowledge of them may be attended with ſingular advantages *. It will ſecure the young ſtudent from being caught in the ſnares which

* A very convincing proof of this we have lately had, in that moſt maſterly piece of reaſoning, called, *Divine Benevolence aſſerted, &c.* by Dr. Balguy. Whoever has read this with the attention it requires and deſerves, will moſt earneſtly wiſh that nothing may prevent the learned author from gratifying the public with *that larger work*, of which the treatiſe we are ſpeaking of is only a ſmall ſpecimen.

ſophiſts

ſophiſts ſometimes weave out of thoſe delicate materials; will teach him to abſtract, and generalize, and ſimplify his ideas; will qualify him to drag out falſhood and ſcepticiſm from the midſt of thoſe obſcure, and intricate, and crooked mazes, in which they love to wander; to detect the endleſs errors, into which exceſſive ſubtilty and falſe refinement muſt neceſſarily lead us; to perceive that a quick underſtanding may as eaſily miſs the middle point where truth reſides, by going beyond it, as a dull one, by falling ſhort of it; and that there are in religion, as in all ſciences, certain primary and fundamental truths, which are only obſcured by much reaſoning, and which, after having been once firmly eſtabliſhed, ſhould be laid up as firſt principles in the mind, where no ſubtle objections or acute diſtinctions ſhould be allowed to weaken or deſtroy their force.

Thus do each of the ſeveral branches of learning, which compoſe the plan of education in this place, contribute ſomething towards the SOBER-MINDEDNESS recommended by St. Paul. And, what is of ſtill greater importance, the fund of knowledge which our

youth

youth will probably acquire in the proſecution of theſe ſtudies, nay, even the very difficulties which may ſometimes obſtruct their progreſs, will gradually prepare their underſtandings for the admiſſion of ſtill nobler ideas, and ſublimer contemplations. In their purſuit, more eſpecially, of moral and religious truth, they will find, as I before remarked, ſo much wanting to give complete ſatisfaction to the mind, that they cannot but ſee the abſolute neceſſity of ſome more perfect ſyſtem of doctrines and of duties, to ſupply the many defects of natural religion, to ſtrengthen its obligations, to enforce it with proper ſanctions, and to give it a vital and effectual influence upon the heart.

Under the impreſſion of ſuch reflections as theſe, it is obvious that there cannot be a more proper time for carrying the young academic ſtill one ſtep further, and giving him ſome inſight into the nature, the deſign, the evidences, and the precepts of the CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

But here unfortunately we are obliged to ſtop. For this moſt important part of education no *adequate*, no *public* proviſion is yet made

made in this univerſity. Revealed religion has not yet a proper rank aſſigned it here among the other initiatory ſciences; is not made an indiſpenſable qualification for academical honours and rewards; has not, in ſhort, all that regard paid to it, which its own intrinſic worth, and the peculiar circumſtances at preſent attending it, ſeem to demand.

It is well known, that an unbounded freedom is now indulged to the publication of the moſt licentious opinions; and that theſe are not, as formerly, confined to bulky volumes of infidelity, or to dull and phlegmatic reaſoners; but are diſperſed throughout the nation in the moſt commodious and pleaſing vehicles, in works of fancy and amuſement, and even uſeful information, which diffuſe irreligion almoſt imperceptibly through the kingdom, and on which men of real genius do not ſcruple to waſte their time and miſapply their talents. Theſe are the books moſt likely to fall into the hands, and to captivate the hearts, of young men of rank and fortune, at that very dangerous period of life, when they firſt leave their colleges to mingle in the great world; and on theſe, if they have not

here

here been taught ſounder principles and better things, they will moſt probably form their notions of religion, and regulate their future conduct. Add to this, that a very great part of thoſe who are bred up among us to the church, and from whoſe pious labours we muſt chiefly hope for a remedy to theſe evils, are frequently obliged, by the ſtraitneſs of their circumſtances, to enter on the miniſterial office within a very ſhort time after they have taken their firſt degree, and are, many of them, immediately engaged in large and laborious cures. If, therefore, they have not before this time acquired ſome tolerable knowledge of their profeſſion, how can they undertake to explain the Goſpel to others, and defend it againſt ſo many formidable oppoſers? In the two other learned profeſſions, LAW and PHYSIC, a regular courſe of ſtudy in the theory of each is generally deemed requiſite, before thoſe who engage in either, think it ſafe or creditable to venture on the practical part of their buſineſs. And it will be difficult, I conceive, to aſſign a ſatisfactory reaſon, why a competent fund of profeſſional knowledge is not equally neceſſary

to

to the divine, previous to his embarking in the various and laborious functions of his ſacred calling; unleſs it be maintained, that the future ſalvation of mankind is a matter of leſs importance than their temporal property or their bodily health.

Does it not then ſeem highly adviſable for us to turn our thoughts a little more towards this great object than has been hitherto deemed requiſite? It is true, indeed, that ſome acquaintance with the abſtruſer ſciences may be a very proper foundation even for theological learning. But it cannot ſurely be neceſſary to lay this foundation ſo exceedingly deep as is here generally done. It cannot be neceſſary to conſume the flower and vigour of the youthful mind, in the very firſt ſtage as it were of its literary progreſs; to occupy it wholly for *three entire years* in theſe preparatory ſtudies, when it ſhould be going on to the "principles" and elements at leaſt "of the doctrine of Chriſt *;" ſhould be advancing gradually from the foundation to the ſuperſtructure; ſhould be learning, under wiſe and experienced "maſter-builders," to erect that ſacred edifice of divine knowledge

* Heb. vi. 1.

which muſt be its ſtrong hold and fortreſs againſt the many adverſaries it will ſoon have to contend with. If this great work is not carried on to a certain point, during the courſe of education in this place; when can we hope that it ever will? They who come here with a view to the means, not of acquiring, but of adorning a fortune, no ſooner quit this literary retirement, than they engage with ardour in the various purſuits of faſhionable life, and have ſeldom either inclination or leiſure for ſtudies of a ſerious nature. They who are deſtined to ſecular profeſſions, or other active employments, find themſelves, after leaving this place, ſo fully occupied, firſt in learning, and then diſcharging, the duties of their reſpective vocations, that they can ſcarce ever bring themſelves to beſtow that degree of attention on religious enquiries which their importance deſerves. It is here, then, or no where, that this great object muſt be brought home to their thoughts, and made a part, *an eſſential* part of their academic acquirements. And this neceſſity (as I have already remarked) is ſtill more apparent with reſpect to thoſe who

who are ſent here to qualify themſelves for the paſtoral office; whoſe peculiar province and buſineſs it will be to inſtruct the people committed to their care "in the words of eternal life," and who muſt therefore never expoſe themſelves to the hazard of that inſulting queſtion, "Thou that teacheſt another, teacheſt thou not *firſt* thyſelf?"

It muſt be acknowledged, indeed, and it is acknowledged with pleaſure, that in many private colleges, the great outlines of the Chriſtian diſpenſation are, by the excellent tutors with which this place abounds, explained and illuſtrated in a very able manner, to their reſpective pupils. But if there be any weight in what has been here ſuggeſted, it will be well worthy of our conſideration, whether ſomething more than this is not now become neceſſary; whether it will not be highly ſuitable to the dignity, the ſanctity of this truly reſpectable and learned body, to lend the whole weight of their authority to ſo good a cauſe; to aſſiſt private inſtructions by *public incitement*; to give ſome ſignal *academical encouragement* to this branch of knowledge, ſomething that ſhould make the

cultivation of it not only highly reputable, but indiſpenſably neceſſary. And, fortunately for us, the way is eaſy and open to the execution of any ſuch deſign. That noble ſpirit of emulation, which ſo eminently diſtinguiſhes the youth of this place, and puſhes them on to the moſt wonderful attainments in the abſtruſeſt ſciences, affords us an opportunity, which no other ſeminary in the world can furniſh, of raiſing whatever fruit we pleaſe from ſo generous a ſtock. We have only to make revealed religion *an eſſential part of univerſity learning*, and aſſign to it a proper ſhare of the uſual honorary rewards, and it will ſoon be purſued with the ſame ardour of mind and vigour of application, as all the other parts of literature. The current of ſtudy amongſt us, which was generally thought to run too ſtrongly towards mathematical ſubjects, has of late years, by means of the excellent inſtitutions in favour of claſſical learning, been, in ſome degree, diverted into another and more uſeful courſe. By the method here propoſed, (or any other of the ſame tendency which ſhould be judged more eligible) there would be one more, and that a ſtill nobler

channel

channel opened to it: and ſome few of thoſe many hours, and thoſe fine talents, which are ſtill, I fear, too laviſhly waſted here on abſtract ſpeculations, in the moſt precious and improveable part of life, would be then more profitably employed in learning the rudiments of evangelical truth; and thereby enabling one part of our youth to preſerve their religious principles uncorrupted by the artifices of infidelity, in their future commerce with the world; and the other part to become powerful defenders and ſucceſsful diſpenſers of the word of God *.

This univerſity had, in the concluſion of

* Since the firſt publication of this Sermon, ſome advance has been made towards the accompliſhment of the author's wiſhes. Mr. Norris, a gentleman of fortune in Norfolk (into whoſe hands ſome extracts from this diſcourſe happened to fall) left by his will, a few years ago, a rent charge of a hundred guineas a year, for the eſtabliſhment and maintenance of a Profeſſor in the univerſity of Cambridge, for the ſole purpoſe of reading lectures to the ſtudents there, on the Chriſtian Revelation. To this he added twelve pounds a year for a medal and ſome books, as a premium for the beſt proſe Engliſh eſſay on the ſame ſubject. It would be a real conſolation to the friends of religion, and eſpecially to thoſe whoſe province it is to examine candidates for orders, if theſe well-meant inſtitutions, in conjunction with any other ſubſidiary one which the wiſdom of the univerſity might think fit to adopt, ſhould in due time effectually anſwer the great purpoſes enlarged upon and recommended in the preceding pages.

the laſt century, the honour of giving birth to a ſtupendous ſyſtem of philoſophy, erected by its great diſciple NEWTON, on the immoveable baſis of experiment and demonſtration; which, by degrees, ſupplanted and overthrew a viſionary though ingenious repreſentation of nature, drawn by fancy, and ſupported by conjecture. Animated with this ſucceſs, let it now endeavour to puſh its conqueſts ſtill further into the regions of ignorance and error, to baniſh from the kingdom the extravagant conceits of modern ſcepticiſm, no leſs deſtitute of all foundation in truth, utility, and ſound reaſoning, than the philoſophical romance of Deſcartes; and to eſtabliſh for ever in the minds of the Britiſh youth, a religion founded not on "the enticing words of man's wiſdom," but on "demonſtration of the ſpirit and of the "power of God *."

This will be to promote, in the moſt effectual manner, the benevolent purpoſes of thoſe great and pious benefactors we are now going to commemorate; whoſe *firſt object* in theſe magnificent foundations was, un-

* 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5.

doubtedly,

doubtedly, the advancement of religion; who, with a true greatneſs of ſoul, carried their views forwards into *eternity*, and plainly meant that in theſe elegant retreats, we ſhould not only lay the foundations of immortal fame on earth, but qualify ourſelves for obtaining, through the merits of our Redeemer, a real and truly glorious immortality in heaven.

SERMON IX.

DEUTERONOMY V. 12.

KEEP THE SABBATH-DAY, TO SANCTIFY IT, AS THE LORD THY GOD HATH COMMANDED THEE.

THE appropriation of one day in ſeven to the purpoſes of religion, is a practice peculiar to the Jewiſh and the Chriſtian revelations. And it is a practice ſo full of wiſdom, utility, and humanity, that it may well be produced as one argument, among many others ſtill more convincing, of their divine original.

By comparing together the primary inſtitution of the ſabbath, as related in the Book of Geneſis, and the alterations it afterwards received from our Saviour and his apoſtles, it

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is evident that the *Chriſtian ſabbath* is to be conſidered under two diſtinct points of view.

Firſt. As a day of reſt from labour.

Secondly. As a day ſet apart for the public worſhip of God.

I. As a day of reſt from labour.

This reſt was, by the Moſaic law, ſo rigorouſly exacted, that the violation of it was prohibited under no leſs a penalty than that of death*. Our divine maſter, in this as well as in many other inſtances, greatly ſoftened the ſeverity of that law. But yet it was plainly his intention, that there ſhould be *a general ceſſation of labour* on this day. The original reaſon for this part of the inſtitution ſtill ſubſiſted in *his* days, and muſt ſubſiſt till the end of time; namely, that it might be a ſtanding memorial of the great work of creation, from which the Almighty Author of it *reſted*, or *ceaſed*, on the ſeventh day, and therefore he bleſſed and ſanctified that day for ever. To this Chriſt himſelf added another reaſon, of a ſimilar nature; having on the following day *reſted* from the great work of redemption,

* Exod. xxxv. 2.

which

which he completed by riſing from the dead. Our abſtinence, therefore, from the ordinary occupations of life on the Lord's day, is a tacit kind of acknowledgement that we were created by God, and redeemed by Chriſt, and that we are duly ſenſible of the duties reſulting from thoſe relations. It appears, moreover, that our Lord himſelf very religiouſly obſerved the reſt of the ſabbath; which he no otherwiſe interrupted than by miracles of mercy and compaſſion. And we may moſt certainly conclude, that the very ſame benevolence of diſpoſition which dictated theſe humane exceptions, would prompt him alſo to improve and enforce, both by his doctrine and example, the general rule of *reſting* on the ſeventh day. For never was there any injunction ſo replete with kindneſs and compaſſion to the whole human race, eſpecially to the loweſt and moſt wretched part of it, as this. There cannot be a more pleaſing or a more conſolatory idea preſented to the human mind, than that of *one univerſal pauſe of labour* throughout the whole Chriſtian world at the ſame moment of time; diffuſing reſt, comfort, and peace through a large part of

of the habitable globe, and affording eaſe and refreſhment, not only to the loweſt part of our own ſpecies, but to their fellow-labourers in the brute creation. Even theſe are enabled to join in this ſilent act of adoration, this mute kind of homage to the great Lord of all: and although they are incapable of any *ſentiments* of religion, yet by this means they become ſharers in the *bleſſings* of it. Every man of the leaſt ſenſibility muſt ſee, muſt feel the beauty and utility of ſuch an inſtitution as this; and muſt ſee, at the ſame time, the cruelty of invading this moſt valuable privilege of the inferior claſs of mankind, and breaking in upon that ſacred repoſe, which God himſelf has, in pity to their ſufferings, given to thoſe that ſtand moſt in need of it. It was a point in which it highly became the majeſty and the goodneſs of heaven itſelf to interpoſe. And happy was it for the world that it did ſo. For, had man, unfeeling man, been left to himſelf, with no other ſpur to compaſſion than natural inſtinct, or unaſſiſted reaſon, there is but too much ground to apprehend he would have been deaf to the cries of his labouring brethren,

brethren, would have harraſſed and worn them out with inceſſant toil; and when they implored, by looks and ſigns of diſtreſs, ſome little intermiſſion, would perhaps have anſwered them in the language of Pharaoh's taſk-maſters, "Ye are idle, ye are idle. "There ſhall not aught of your daily taſks "be diminiſhed; *let more work* be laid upon "them, that they may labour therein *."

That this is no uncandid repreſentation of the natural hardneſs of the human heart, till it is ſubdued and ſoftened by the influences of divine grace, we have but too many unanſwerable proofs, in the ſavage treatment which the ſlaves of the antients, even of the moſt civilized and poliſhed antients, met with from their unrelenting maſters. To them, alas! there was no ſabbath, no ſeventh day of reſt! The whole week, the whole year, was, in general, with but few exceptions, one uninterrupted round of labour, tyranny, and oppreſſion.

To theſe inhumanities the merciful temper of our religion has in a great meaſure put an end; but there are others, ariſing from the

* Exod. v, 9. 11. 17.

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moſt ſhameful intruſions on the ſacred leiſure of the ſabbath, which it has not yet been able to overcome. Look into the ſtreets of this great metropolis on the Lord's day, and ſee whether they convey the idea of *a day of reſt*. Do not our ſervants and our cattle ſeem to be almoſt as fully occupied on that day as on any other? And, as if this was not a ſufficient infringement of their rights, we contrive, by needleſs entertainments at home, and needleſs journies abroad, which are often *by choice and inclination reſerved* for this very day, to take up all the little remaining part of their leiſure time. A ſabbath-day's journey was, among the Jews, a proverbial expreſſion for a very ſhort one. Among us it can have no ſuch meaning affixed to it. That day ſeems to be conſidered by too many, as ſet apart, by divine and human authority, for the purpoſe, not of *reſt*, but of its direct oppoſite, the *labour* of *travelling*; thus adding one day more of torment to thoſe generous but wretched animals whoſe ſervices they hire; and who, being generally ſtrained beyond their ſtrength the other ſix days of the week, have, of all creatures under heaven, the beſt

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and moſt equitable claim to ſuſpenſion of labour on the ſeventh. Conſiderations ſuch as theſe may perhaps appear to ſome below the dignity of this place, and the ſolemnity of a Chriſtian aſſembly. But benevolence, even to the brute creation, is, in its degree, a duty, no leſs than to our own ſpecies; and it is mentioned by Solomon as a ſtriking feature in the character of a righteous man, that "he is "merciful even to his beaſt." HE, without whoſe permiſſion "not a ſparrow falls to the "ground, and who feedeth the young ravens "that call upon him," will not ſuffer even the meaneſt work of his hands to be treated cruelly with impunity. He is the common father of the whole creation. He takes every part of it under his protection. He has, in various paſſages of Scripture, expreſſed his concern even for irrational creatures, and has declared more eſpecially, in the moſt explicit terms, that the reſt of the ſabbath was meant *for our cattle and our ſervants* as well as for ourſelves.

II. But ceſſation from labour is not the only duty of the Lord's Day. Although it is to be *a day of reſt*, yet it is not to be, what

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too many ſeem willing to make it, *a day of indolence and inactivity*. There are employments marked out for it of a very important nature; and of theſe the firſt and moſt eſſential is,

THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD.

It is evident, both from reaſon and Scripture, that public worſhip is a moſt uſeful and indiſpenſable duty. It is equally evident, that if this duty *is* to be performed, ſome fixed and ſtated *time* for performing it is abſolutely neceſſary: for without this it is impoſſible that any number of perſons can ever be collected together in one place. Now one day in ſeven ſeems to be as proper and convenient a portion of our time to be allotted to this uſe, as any other that can be named. "The returns of it are frequent enough to keep alive the ſenſe of religion in our hearts, and diſtant enough to leave a very ſufficient interval for our worldly concerns."

If then this time was fixed only by the laws, or even by the cuſtoms of our country, it would be our duty and our wiſdom to comply with it. Conſidering it merely as *an antient*

antient uſuage, yet if antiquity can render an uſage venerable, this muſt be of all others the *moſt* venerable; for it is cœval with the world itſelf. But it had moreover, as we have ſeen, the ſanction of a divine command. From the very beginning of time God bleſſed and ſanctified the ſeventh day to the purpoſes of religion *. That injunction was again repeated to the Jews in the moſt ſolemn manner at the promulgation of their law from mount Sinai †, and once more urged upon them by Moſes in the words of the text: "Keep the Sabbath-day, to ſanctify it, as the "Lord thy God hath commanded thee."

After our Lord's reſurrection, the firſt day of the week was, in memory of that great event, ſubſtituted in the room of the ſeventh; and from that time to the preſent, that is, for almoſt eighteen hundred years, it has been conſtantly ſet apart for the public worſhip of God by the whole Chriſtian world: And, whatever difference of opinion there may have been in other reſpects, in this all parties, ſects, and denominations of Chriſtians have univerſally and invariably agreed. By theſe

* Gen. ii, 3. † Exod. xx. 8, 9, 10, 11.

means it comes to paſs, that on this day many millions of people, in almoſt every region of the earth, are at one and the ſame time engaged in proſtrating themſelves before the throne of grace, and offering up their ſacrifice of prayer, praiſe, and thankſgiving to the common Lord of all, "in whom they live, "and move, and have their being."

There is in this view of the Lord's day ſomething ſo wonderfully awful and magnificent, that one would think it almoſt impoſſible for any man to reſiſt the inclination he muſt find in himſelf to join in this general aſſembly of the human race; "to go with "the multitude," as the pſalmiſt expreſſes it, "into the houſe of God," and to take a part in a ſolemnity ſo ſtriking to the imagination, ſo ſuitable to the majeſty of Heaven, ſo adapted to the wants, the neceſſities, the infirmities, the obligations, and the duties of a created and a dependent being.

That they who avow an open contempt of all religion, and *profeſs* to live without God in the world, without any belief of his exiſtence, or at leaſt of his providential ſuperintendence; that theſe, I ſay, ſhould think it a very

a very needleſs waſte of time to attend divine ſervice, can be no wonder. But that any perſon who calls himſelf a diſciple of Chriſt, or even a believer in one Supreme Being, ſhould either totally neglect, or but rarely frequent the public worſhip of God on that only day which laws both human and divine have appropriated to it, is an inſtance of contempt for the moſt ſacred and moſt uſeful inſtitutions, which one ſhould hardly be diſpoſed to credit, if conſtant and melancholy experience did not too clearly prove the reality of the fact. We ſee continually that the moſt trivial pretences of weather, of indiſpoſition, of buſineſs, of company; pretences which would not be ſuffered to interfere one moment with any favourite purſuit, or amuſement; are thought reaſons of ſufficient weight to juſtify us in ſlighting the expreſs commands, and deſerting the ſervice of our Maker and our Redeemer. And it is greatly to be lamented, that theſe neglects have generally been obſerved to be moſt prevalent among thoſe whoſe education and rank in life ſhould have furniſhed them with the beſt principles and the compleateſt know-

ledge of their duty; whoſe example is moſt open to obſervation, and has the greateſt influence on public manners; whoſe large proportion of worldly bleſſings demands a more than ordinary warmth of gratitude to Heaven; and whoſe ſituation expoſes them to ſuch a variety of trying circumſtances as require a more than ordinary ſhare of divine aſſiſtance *.

But ſuppoſing our attendance on the houſe of God to be ſuch as it ought, there ſtill remains a queſtion of no ſmall importance, How are we to employ the remaining part of the Lord's Day? Are we to dedicate it altogether to private devotion and religious meditation, to ſeclude ourſelves from all ſociety, and to aſſume an affected gloom of countenance and ſeverity of deportment; or, may we freely give the reins to our inclination for pleaſure, and indulge ourſelves without re-

* It muſt be acknowledged, indeed, that the preſent remarkable thinneſs of our churches on Sundays, at the Eaſt as well as the Weſt end of the town (more eſpecially at the time of *evening ſervice*, which is now but too generally given up as quite ſuperfluous) is a proof, that neglect of divine worſhip is not confined to the great, but has pervaded almoſt every claſs of people in this capital.

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ſerve in all the uſual gayeties and amuſements of the other ſix days in the week? Both theſe extremes may be ſeen among different denominations of Chriſtians in foreign kingdoms; and they have each, at different periods, been adopted in this. At the beginning of the laſt century, *a book of ſports and paſtimes* for Sundays was ſet forth, and recommended to the good people of this land by a prince *, who has been ſometimes celebrated for his wiſdom, but who in this inſtance certainly was not wiſe. It gave great, and it muſt be owned, juſt offence to the riſing ſect of Puritans; who, in the next reign, thinking it impoſſible to recede too much from the former profanations of the Lord's Day, ran with too much vehemence into the oppoſite extreme; and converted the moſt joyful of all feſtivals into a day of ſilent, ſullen, auſtere reſerve, and a rigorous abſtinence from every thing that had the ſmalleſt tincture of good-humour. When all theſe extravagancies had ſubſided, and the conſtitution, both civil and eccleſiaſtical, recovered its antient form, the Church of England, with that wiſdom and

* James the Firſt.

moderation which have generally governed its deciſions, took a middle courſe with reſpect to the obſervation of Sunday. In conformity to antient ſtatutes and uſages, it diſcouraged all public ſpectacles and diverſions, but allowed the more rational pleaſures of ſociety, and the chearfulneſs of friendly intercourſe and converſation; thus drawing the line, with a diſcreet and a ſkilful hand, between the two oppoſite extremes of phariſaical preciſeneſs, and ſecular diſſipation. This prudent medium has now for many years been preſerved among us; but how much longer it will be preſerved, ſeems at preſent no eaſy matter to ſay. The licence of the times, however daring in *other* reſpects, had hitherto ſpared the day conſecrated to our Maker. But it has now carried its outrages even into that once awful ſanctuary. In the very midſt of all our dangers and diſtreſſes, when it did not ſeem to be *quite* the time for ſetting Heaven at defiance, new invaſions of the Sabbath have ſprung up with ſurpriſing effrontery; and we are rapidly departing from that ſimplicity, ſobriety, and purity, in which this holy feſtival has been delivered down to us by our anceſtors,

anceſtors. Various places of amuſement for the Sunday evening, unknown to former ages, unknown, I believe, to any other Chriſtian country, have been openly announced, and, to the diſgrace of our religion and our laws, have been as openly frequented *.

But how can we wonder at theſe ſtrange extravagancies in the lower claſſes of the people, when they only improve a little on the liberties taken by too many of their ſuperiors? If they ſee magnificent gaming-houſes erected, and publicly reſorted to on the Lord's Day; if they ſee that pernicious amuſement admitted on the ſame day even into private families; if they ſee numerous and ſplendid aſſemblies diſturbing the repoſe, and violating the ſactity of the Sunday evening, what do we think muſt be the conſe-

* Since this was written, the wiſdom of the legiſlature has by an expreſs act of Parliament, effectually ſuppreſſed theſe nuiſances; ſome of which, from the beſt and moſt authentic information, I have reaſon to believe were nurſeries of popery, infidelity, and vice. It is to be hoped, that the ſame high authority will, at a proper time, proceed to the correction of various other abuſes, that ſtill infringe, in a flagrant degree, the reſt and the devotion of the Lord's Day, but which it was thought not prudent to include in the above-mentioned act.

quence? Is it not apparent that they will learn from their betters the fatal leſſon of inſulting the moſt venerable cuſtoms of their country, and the moſt ſacred ordinances of Heaven? that they will ſoon even *excel* their maſters, and carry their contempt of decency far beyound the orignal examples of it, which made the firſt impreſſion on their minds?

But apart from theſe conſequences, which are already but too viſible, it behoves every man who indulges himſelf in any unwarrantable freedoms on the Lord's Day, to conſider very ſeriouſly, "what ſpirit he is "of," and what the turn of mind muſt be from whence ſuch conduct ſprings. If, after having ſpent ſix days out of ſeven in a conſtant round of amuſements, he cannot exiſt without them even on the ſeventh, it is high time for him to look to his own heart, to check his greedy appetite for pleaſure, and to put himſelf, without delay, under the direction of higher and better principles. If we cannot give up theſe follies one day in the week, how ſhall we bring ourſelves to part with them, as at laſt we muſt, for ever? Would it not be infinitely more

more wiſe and prudent to diſentangle ourſelves from them by degrees, and to try whether it is not poſſible to acquire a reliſh for worthier enjoyments? To aſſiſt us in this moſt uſeful work, and to put this world, and all its frivolous purſuits, for a few moments out of our thoughts, was one great purpoſe of the Chriſtian Sabbath; and it is a purpoſe for which we of the preſent times ought to be peculiarly thankful. For a day of reſt from diverſions, is now become as neceſſary to one part of the world, as a day of reſt from labour is to the other. Let us then give ourſelves a little reſpite, a little refreſhment from the *fatigue* of pleaſure. Let us not ſuffer diverſions of any kind, much leſs of a ſuſpicious and a dangerous kind, to intrude on that ſmall portion of time which God has appropriated to himſelf. The whole of it is barely ſufficient for the important uſes to which it is deſtined, and to defraud our Maker of any conſiderable part of it is a ſpecies of ſacrilege.

But how then (you will ſay) ſhall we fill up all thoſe dull, tedious hours, that are not

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ſpent in the public ſervice of the church? How ſhall we prevent that almoſt irreſiſtible languor and heavineſs which are ſo apt to take poſſeſſion of our minds, for want of our uſual diverſions and occupations on this day?

Surely it can require no great ſtretch of invention or ingenuity to find out means of employing our vacant time, both innocently and agreeably. Beſides the ſociety and converſation of our friends, from which we are by no means precluded, might we not for a few hours find amuſement in contemplating the wiſdom, the power, the goodneſs of God in the works of his creation? And might we not draw entertainment, as well as improvement, from ſome of the ſublimer parts of that ſacred volume which contains "the "words of eternal life," and with which therefore it ſurely concerns us to have ſome little acquaintance?

Or, if more active recreations are required, what think you of that which you may make as active as you pleaſe, and which was in fact the ſupreme delight of our divine maſter, *the recreation of doing good?* If, for inſtance, it be

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at all neceſſary (and when was it ever more neceſſary?) to inſtil into the minds of your children ſound principles of virtue and religion; if you have any plans of benevolence to form, any acts of kindneſs or compaſſion to execute; if you have committed injuries which ought to be repaired; if you have received injuries which ought to be forgiven; if friends or relations are at variance, whom by a ſeaſonable interpoſition it would be eaſy to reconcile; if thoſe you moſt eſteem and love ſtand in need of advice, of reproof, of aſſiſtance, of ſupport; if any occaſions, in ſhort, preſent themſelves of convincing the unbeliever, of reclaiming the ſinner, of ſaving the unexperienced, of inſtructing the ignorant, of encouraging the penitent, of ſoothing the afflicted, of protecting the oppreſſed; how can you more profitably, or more delightfully, employ your Sunday leiſure, than in the performance of ſuch duties as theſe; in demonſtrating your piety and gratitude to God, by diffuſing joy and comfort to every part you can reach of that creation, which was the work of his hands, and from which he reſted on the ſeventh day?

Occupations like theſe are in their own nature chearful and enlivening, infinitely more ſo than that moſt gloomy of all amuſements, which is too often ſubſtituted in their room. They are ſuited to the character of the day. They partake in ſome meaſure of its ſanctity. They are (as all the amuſements of ſuch a day ought to be) refined, intellectual, ſpiritual. They fill up, with propriety and conſiſtency, the intervals of divine worſhip, and, in concurrence with that, will help to draw off our attention a little from the objects that perpetually ſurround us, to wean us gradually and gently from a ſcene which we muſt ſome time or other quit, to raiſe our thoughts to higher and nobler contemplations, "to fix "our affections on things above," and thus qualify us for entering into that HEAVENLY SABBATH, *that* EVERLASTING REST, of of which the Chriſtian Sabbath is in ſome degree an emblem, and for which it was meant to prepare and ſanctify our ſouls.

SERMON X.

1 COR. i. 22, 23, 24.

THE JEWS REQUIRE A SIGN, AND THE GREEKS SEEK AFTER WISDOM; BUT WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED, UNTO THE JEWS A STUMBLING-BLOCK, AND UNTO THE GREEKS FOOLISHNESS, BUT UNTO THEM WHICH ARE CALLED, BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS, CHRIST THE POWER OF GOD, AND THE WISDOM OF GOD.

ONE of the principal cauſes of the diſguſt which many perſons have taken at the Goſpel of Chriſt, is the very common, but very unfair practice of judging of it by *preconceived expectations*. They are not content to take what God thinks fit to give; to conſider what it is that the Chriſtian Revela-

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tion really pretends to, what the ends are which it has in view, and how thoſe pretenſions are ſupported and thoſe ends anſwered: but they ſit down and fancy to themſelves what kind of religion the Almighty ought to propoſe, and they ſhould chuſe to receive; and then, not finding Chriſtianity correſpond to theſe imaginations, they are diſappointed and offended, and reject the offer of ſalvation made to them, becauſe it is not made preciſely in their own way. Many inſtances of this unreaſonable and perverſe conduct might be produced from the writings both of antient and modern infidels. But we need go no farther than the text for a very remarkable one; which will at once confirm the truth of the general poſition here advanced, and ſuggeſt ſome uſeful and ſeaſonable reflections.

Both Jews and Greeks were, it ſeems, exceedingly offended *at the croſs of Chriſt*, at the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, or deliverer of mankind. But what were the grounds of this great offence? The apoſtle plainly tells us. The reaſon was, "becauſe the Jews "required a ſign, and the Greeks ſought "after wiſdom." That is, becauſe they had each

each of them previouſly ſettled their notions of the manner in which God *ought* to interpoſe for the reformation and preſervation of mankind; and therefore, whatever contradicted theſe ideas which they had taken up, would appear to them in the higheſt degree improbable and abſurd.

The Jews, it is well known, by taking in too literal a ſenſe ſome high-wrought figurative deſcriptions of the Meſſiah's ſpiritual kingdom and glory (eſpecially a very remarkable one in the prophet Daniel *) and by laying more ſtreſs on theſe miſinterpreted paſſages, and the groundleſs traditions of the Phariſees, than on the plainer and more intelligible parts of the prophetical writings, had worked themſelves into a firm perſuaſion, that the promiſed Saviour was to be a great and powerful temporal prince. They imagined, therefore, that his firſt appearance on earth would be ſuitable to ſuch a character, ſplendid and magnificent; that he would by a ſeries of victories, or ſome deciſive blow, not only reſcue them from the Roman yoke, but

* Dan. vii. 13, 14.

even

even extend the bounds and reſtore the luſtre of the antient Jewiſh kingdom.

When therefore, as the text expreſſes it, "they required a ſign," they did not mean any great miracle in general, nor even (as is commonly ſuppoſed) *any* kind of ſign, without diſtinction, *given from heaven*; but they meant, probably, that preciſe individual ſign abovementioned, *the ſign of the Meſſiah coming with viſible glory in the clouds of heaven*, with his holy angels round him, and all the other enſigns of celeſtial grandeur *. This illuſtrious appearance of their promiſed deliverer, they conſidered as ſo eſſential to his character, ſo indiſpenſable a mark of his heavenly original, that they diſtinguiſhed it by the name of the *ſign of the Son of Man*, *the ſign of his coming* †. And, what is very remarkable, they frequently demanded this ſign, even immediately after our Saviour had worked the moſt aſtoniſhing miracles ‡. The reaſon of this was, becauſe they thought

* See Gerard on the Genius and Evidence of Chriſtianity, p. 177—205.

† Matth. xxiv. 3, 30.

‡ Ib. xvi. 1; xii. 38. John ii. 18, 19, 20.

that

that no regard was due either to miracles, or to any other evidence, ſo long as that *capital* and *deciſive* one, *that ſign from* heaven, on which they had ſet their hearts, was wanting. And this accounts alſo for another thing, no leſs extraordinary, at which ſome perſons have been much ſurpriſed and offended; namely, that our Saviour conſtantly refuſed to give them the ſign they demanded. If this ſign, it is ſaid, would have convinced and converted them; why ſhould they not have been gratified with it? The fact was, that they could not poſſibly be gratified with it; becauſe it was inconſiſtent with that humble and lowly character, in which for the wiſeſt reaſons, God deſigned, and the prophets foretold, that the Redeemer of the world ſhould actually appear. The ſign they wiſhed for, was founded on an expectation of his deſcending viſibly from heaven to this lower world with the utmoſt ſplendour and magnificence. Whereas it was always intended and predicted that he ſhould be born of an earthly parent; ſhould live in an obſcure and indigent condition of life; ſhould be deſpiſed, rejected, put to death upon the croſs, laid in the grave, and

riſe from it again the third day. And therefore his almoſt conſtant reply, when they aſked a ſign, was, "An evil and adulterous "generation ſeeketh after a ſign, and there "ſhall no ſign be given it, but the ſign of "the prophet Jonas *." By which figurative alluſion, he meant to ſignify his own death, burial, and reſurrection. This was in effect ſaying to them, "You aſk a ſign from *heaven*; but the only ſign I ſhall vouchſafe to give you, will be a ſign from the *earth*. Inſtead of deſcending from above, as you expect, in viſible pomp and triumph, I ſhall riſe with ſtill greater triumph from the grave, after being numbered three days with the dead."

Still however they perſiſted in demanding their favourite ſign; and with this falſe idea of the Meſſiah's character on their mind, which could never be rooted out, it is eaſy to ſee how very ill diſpoſed they muſt be to receive and acknowledge a humble, ſuffering, crucified Redeemer. That he was "the ſon "of a carpenter; that he was born at an inn, "and laid in a manger; that he eat and drank "with publicans and ſinners, and had not

* Matth. xii. 39; xvi. 4.

"where

"where to lay his head," theſe were circumſtances of themſelves fully ſufficient to ſhock their prejudices and diſguſt their pride. But when he was moreover betrayed into the hands of his enemies, was mocked, and buffeted, and ſcourged, and at length nailed to the croſs; this they muſt conſider as the moſt undeniable proof of his being an impoſtor, and would as ſoon have believed Barabbas to have been their Meſſiah as him. If, indeed, even then, he would have given them what they wanted, *a ſign from heaven*; if he would have come down from the croſs, would have made his appearance again, as *from heaven*, with every external mark of celeſtial magnificence, and reſtored the kingdom again to Iſrael, they declared that they would ſtill have believed on him. "If he be "THE KING OF ISRAEL," ſaid they, "let "him now come down from the croſs *," let him openly ſhew his regal power, "and "we will believe him." He ſaved others, it is true, he worked many aſtoniſhing miracles; but, unleſs he ſaved himſelf too, unleſs he anſwered their exalted notions

* Matth. xxvii. 42.

of the Meſſiah, he could not poſſibly be the Son of God. His miracles muſt have been wrought by Beelzebub, and he as little worthy of credit as the malefactors who ſuffered with him.

Such were the prepoſſeſſions which made CHRIST CRUCIFIED A STUMBLING-BLOCK TO THE JEWS. The prejudices which made him FOOLISHNESS TO THE GREEKS, were of a different nature. The Greeks were at that time, when the Goſpel was firſt preached to them, as they had been long before, the polite ſcholars and the faſhionable philoſophers of the age. The great buſineſs and delight of theſe men was to ſpeculate on nice metaphyſical points, ſuch as, the firſt principles and elements of things, the nature of the gods, the nature of the human ſoul, the chief good, the ſeveral diviſions of virtue, the origin of good and evil, and other ſubjects of the ſame kind. In theſe diſquiſitions, all that they aimed at was, not to arrive at certainty (for that many of them declared to be abſolutely impoſſible) much leſs to apply the reſult of their diſputations to any one uſeful purpoſe of life; but merely to indulge an inſatiable appetite for ſomething *new*, to gratify

fy an idle and vain curioſity, to amuſe themſelves and others with ſubtle arguments and acute diſtinctions, to ſhew their ingenuity in managing a diſpute, in propoſing captious and artful queſtions, in creating doubts and raiſing difficulties on the plaineſt points, in refining and explaining away every topic they diſcuſſed into perplexity and confuſion, and leaving the mind more diſſatisfied and uninformed at the concluſion than it was at the beginning of the debate. This they imagined, like many other philoſophers in our own times, to be the very perfection of human wiſdom; they thought it worthy of the gods themſelves; and that of courſe, whoever came commiſſioned from Heaven to teach religion to mankind, would teach it in all the forms of the ſchools, with the ſubtlety of a ſophiſt, and the eloquence of a rhetorician. It is eaſy to conceive, then, how exceedingly they muſt be diſappointed, when a new religion was propoſed to them, conſiſting chiefly of a few plain facts, and practical precepts, calculated, not to amuſe the fancy, but to reform the heart; delivered without method or ornament, by a ſet of artleſs unlearned men, who only related what they had ſeen and

heard, and proved the the truth of what they ſaid, not by fine-ſpun arguments, or florid declamations, but in a plain unfaſhionable kind of way, by ſacrificing all that was dear to them, and laying down their lives in teſtimony to their doctrines. As far, indeed, as thoſe doctrines were *new*, they would be well received. For the Athenians, as we learn from the higheſt authority, "ſpent their time "in nothing elſe, but either to tell or to hear "ſome new thing*." When therefore St. Paul came to Athens, and preached to that celebrated ſchool of philoſophy "Jeſus and "the reſurrection," they were extremely ready to give him the hearing, and brought him to the Areopagus, ſaying, "May we know what "this *new* doctrine whereof thou ſpeakeſt "is? for thou bringeſt certain *ſtrange things* "to our ears †." But when they heard what theſe ſtrange things were, BELIEVE IN ONE SUPREME CREATOR AND GOVENOR OF THE WORLD, REPENTANCE, AMENDMENT OF LIFE, CHRIST CRUCIFIED AND RAISED FROM THE DEAD, A GENERAL RESURRECTION, A FUTURE JUDGEMENT, (*ſtrange things* indeed to the ears of an Athenian) ſome

* Acts xvii. 21. † Ib. xvii. 19, 20.

"mocked

"mocked him," laughed at the ſeeming incredibility of what he told them; others ſaid, "We will hear thee again of this matter*;" not probably with any view of enquiring into the evidence of *facts* (the very firſt and principal enquiry that was neceſſary to be made) but of entering into long and learned diſquiſitions on the nature and the fitneſs of the truths in which they were inſtructed. They expected to have all the difficulties relating to JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION, cleared up to them in the moſt pleaſing and ſatisfactory manner, to have all the reaſons on which God acted, laid open before them, and all his proceedings with mankind juſtified on the principles of human wiſdom. Till this were done, the doctrine of CHRIST CRUCIFIED would always appear "fooliſhneſs to the Greeks." The pride of philoſophy, and the ſelf-ſufficiency of learning, would never ſubmit to believe, that a man who ſuffered like a common malefactor could be a teacher ſent from God; that the death of ſo excellent and innocent a perſon could be of any benefit to mankind; that God would make uſe of means to accompliſh his ends, ſo totally different from thoſe which a Greek philoſo-

* Acts xvii. 32.

pher would have fixed on; and that no better and more credible method of inſtructing and ſaving the world could have occurred to Infinite Wiſdom. The ſeeming abſurdity of all this would ſhock the Pagan, no leſs than the ignominy of it did the ſons of Abraham. Show us the meaning and propriety of this plan, ſaid the Greek; ſhow us the dignity and ſplendour of it, ſaid the Jew: prove to us, ſaid the one, the conſiſtency of theſe doctrines with the magnificent deſcriptions of the Meſſiah, by the prophets; reconcile it, ſaid the other, to the principles of reaſon and common ſenſe.

And in what manner now does St. Paul treat theſe objections to the doctrine of the croſs? Does he go about to accommodate and bring it down to the temper of his opponents? Does he endeavour to palliate and ſoften, to conceal or paſs ſlightly over, to explain away or apologize for, this offenſive article? No ſuch matter. Notwithſtanding theſe well-known prejudices againſt a crucified Redeemer, we find him conſtantly, and boldly, and in the moſt expreſs terms aſſerting that the Saviour whom he preached, whoſe diſciple he was, and on whom he wiſhed all mankind to believe, was put to death upon the croſs,

croſs, and gave himſelf a ſacrifice for the ſin of the whole world. He well knew how ſhocking this would ſound to ſome, and how abſurd to others; but he perſiſted in his courſe; he felt the truth and importance of the fact; and, regardleſs of conſequences, he declared it every where aloud, and left it to work its own way. "I am not aſhamed," ſays he, "of the Goſpel of Chriſt; for it is the "power of God unto ſalvation, to every one "that believeth, to the Jew firſt, and alſo to "the Greek *." "God forbid that I ſhould "glory," ſays he, in another place, "ſave in "the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by "whom the world is crucified unto me, and "I unto the world †." And it is evidently in the ſame ſtrain of triumph and exultation, that he ſpeaks of this doctrine in the text. "The Jews require a ſign, and the Greeks "ſeek after wiſdom; but we" (regardleſs of both) "preach Chriſt crucified, to the Jews "a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fool-"iſhneſs; but unto them which are called, "both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt the power of "God, and the wiſdom of God."

* Rom. i. 16. † Gal. vi. 14.

The

The inferences I mean to draw from the preceding obſervations, are theſe two that follow.

I. The firſt is, that the friends of Revelation have no need to be diſturbed or alarmed at a circumſtance which has been ſometimes dwelt upon with expreſſions of *ſurprize* and *concern*; namely, that all thoſe virtuous and learned philoſophers, who lived in the firſt ages of the Goſpel, and "adorned the times in which they flouriſhed, ſuch as Seneca, the elder and the younger Pliny, Tacitus, Plutarch, Galen, Epictetus, and Marcus Antoninus, either overlooked or rejected the evidences of the Goſpel; and that their language or their ſilence equally diſcovered their contempt for the Chriſtians, who had in their time diffuſed themſelves over the Roman Empire *."

The ſimple fact, that theſe eminent men did not embrace Chriſtianity, is admitted; and *concerned*, undoubtedly, every compaſſionate mind muſt be at ſo unhappy an inſtance of perſeverance in error; but whoever reflects

* See the Hiſtory of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. i. p. 516.

on

on what has been ſaid above, will not be much *ſurprized*, that CHRIST CRUCIFIED ſhould be FOOLISHNESS to the *Roman* ſage as well as to the *Greek*. That ſame philoſophy, which, we are told, "had purified their minds from the prejudices of ſuperſtition," had ſubſtituted in their room certain *other* prejudices, that would effectually prevent them from embracing the Goſpel, if ever they condeſcended to beſtow a ſingle thought upon it, or to make the leaſt enquiry into it; which is far from being certain. Full of ſyſtem and of ſcience, of the all-ſufficiency of reaſon, the dignity of human nature, and the abſolute perfection of Stoical wiſdom and virtue, they muſt needs regard with ſupercilious contempt an unſyſtematical and unſcientifical religion, firſt promulged in an unpoliſhed and unlettered corner of the world, by the ſon of a carpenter, who never ſtudied at Athens or at Rome: preached afterwards by illiterate fiſhermen and mechanics, and received with eagerneſs by the illiterate populace. They would never endure a religion that rejected the aid of eloquence and learning, in the purſuit of which they had ſpent their lives; a religion that laid

laid open the weakneſs and depravity of the human heart, and the inſufficiency of our own powers, either to lead us to a juſt knowledge of our duty, or ſupport us in the due performance of it, without ſupernatural aid; which inculcated the neceſſity of a mediator, a redeemer, a ſanctifier, and required the *very unphiloſophical* virtues of meekneſs, humility, contrition, ſelf-abaſement, ſelf-denial, renovation of heart and reformation of life; which taught the doctrines of a reſurrection from the grave, and an eternal exiſtence in another world, doctrines that appeared to them not only perfectly ridiculous, but even *impoſſible**; which "choſe the fooliſh things "of the world to confound the *wiſe*," (a title peculiarly arrogated by the Stoics) "and the "weak things of the world to confound the "things that are mighty †; caſting down "imaginations, and every high thing that "exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of "God, and bringing into captivity every "thought to the obedience of Chriſt ‡." Theſe were doctrines which not even a

* Acts xvii. 32. Plin. Nat. Hiſt. ii. 7.
† 1 Cor. i. 27. ‡ 2 Cor. x. 5.

Stoical

Stoical *ſlave*, much leſs a Stoical *Emperor*, could ever ſubmit to liſten to, with any degree of patience. Where then can be the wonder, that, on minds labouring under ſuch ſtrong prepoſſeſſions as theſe, neither the internal excellence, nor the external proofs, of the Chriſtian revelation could ever make the ſmalleſt impreſſion?

II. The next inference I would offer to your conſideration is, that although the doctrine *of Chriſt crucified* is one of thoſe which are the moſt offenſive to the philoſophers and diſputers of this world, yet we ſhould not be in the leaſt diſmayed by their oppoſition to it; nor remit any thing of our diligence and earneſtneſs in aſſerting the truth, and inſiſting on the importance, of this fundamental article of our faith. We have ſeen, that at the very firſt publication of the Goſpel, this doctrine gave the utmoſt ſcandal to the pride of the Jew, and the wiſdom of the Greek. We have ſeen too what little regard was paid to them by the great apoſtle of the Gentiles. The ſame prejudices do in ſome meaſure ſtill ſubſiſt; and deſerve to meet with the ſame treatment. There are *Jews* and

Greeks

Greeks ſtill to be found in every Chriſtian country. *Unbelievers*, I mean, who in their way of thinking and reaſoning on the ſubject of revelation reſemble both; who are, like the former, ſhocked at the ſeeming ignominy of the croſs, and, like the latter, diſguſted with the abſurdity of ſuppoſing, that the ſufferings and the death of an unoffending individual, and of one too that pretended to be nothing leſs than the Son of God, could in any way contribute to the ſalvation of a guilty world. It concerns not us to ſatisfy theſe faſtidious reaſoners. The only proper anſwer to them is, that our faith "does not "ſtand (and was not *deſigned* to ſtand) in the "wiſdom of men, but in the power of God*." All that *we* have to do, is to content ourſelves with facts, and to receive with thankfulneſs the doctrine of redemption, as we find it delivered in the plain, and expreſs, and emphatical words of ſcripture. We may ſafely truſt ourſelves in the hands of God, and rely on *his* wiſdom for the beſt methods of redeeming us. His dealings with mankind are truly *great* and *wiſe*, but he does not conduct himſelf

* 1 Cor. ii. 5.

ſelf on the principles of *worldly* grandeur, or *worldly* wiſdom. On the contrary, it is plainly his intention, in this and a thouſand other inſtances, to humble, and mortify, and confound them both. We have, therefore, no reaſon to be afraid of either, "for the "fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than men, and "the weakneſs of God is ſtronger than "men*."

Artful and ingenious cavillers will attempt to lead us into long diſquiſitions and ſubtle ſpeculations on the ſubject. They will ſtart innumerable difficulties, propoſe enſnaring queſtions, and urge us with a variety of ſeeming abſurdities. But, unmoved by all their artifices, let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith, without wavering, and without *philoſophizing*. Unleſs we are admitted into the counſels of God, it is impoſſible for us to comprehend *all* the reaſons which induced him to prefer that particular method of redeeming us which he has choſen. But yet, what we *may* underſtand of it is ſufficient to convince us, that it is admirably well calculated for the purpoſes which it ſeems deſigned to anſwer; and that although the doc-

* 1 Cor. i. 25.

trine

trine of the croſs is "to them that periſh, "foolifhneſs," "yet to them that are called," that is, to all who are ſincerely diſpoſed to embrace the offers of divine mercy made to them in the Goſpel, it is, as the text affirms it to be, "CHRIST, THE POWER OF GOD, "AND THE WISDOM OF GOD." To enter into the proof of this at large would require a volume. But the ſlighteſt and moſt ſuperficial view of the ſubject will be ſufficient to ſhow, what great, and important, and ſeemingly oppoſite ends were anſwered by the death of Chriſt upon the croſs.

By this extraordinary event, the power of death itſelf, and the dominion of Satan, "the prince of this world," were, as the ſcriptures inform us, at once deſtroyed*. It gave occaſion to that moſt aſtoniſhing miracle, the reſurrection of our Lord from the dead. It was a ſeal and confirmation of the new covenant of mercy between God and man, as covenants uſed antiently to be confirmed by ſacrifices. It was a completion of the antient prophecies concerning our Saviour, and reconciled that apparent contra-

* 2 Tim. i. 10. Heb. ii. 14.

diction

diction between the deſcription of his temporal ſufferings and his ſpiritual glories, which ſo much perplexed and confounded the Jews. It taught mankind that hardeſt of all leſſons (a leſſon which is, God knows, but too neceſſary for every human being in his paſſage through the world) to bear the cruelleſt indignities, the heavieſt afflictions, and the acuteſt ſufferings, with compoſure, patience, meekneſs, and reſignation to the will of Heaven. It affected, what of all other things ſeemed the moſt difficult, the ſalvation of repenting ſinners, without either puniſhing them, or weakening the authority of God's moral government; and, while it afforded aſſurance of pardon for paſt offences, gave no encouragement to future tranſgreſſions. And what compleats the whole is, that this *doctrine of the croſs*, which by the proud reaſoners of that age was called *fooliſhneſs*, did notwithſtanding make its way in the world with incredible rapidity, and produced ſuch a reformation in the hearts and lives of men, as all the eloquence and ſubtilty of the greateſt philoſophers could never accompliſh. When we reflect on theſe things, we muſt

ſurely allow, that although there may be many things in the doctrine of redemption to us inexplicable, yet it appears plainly, even from our imperfect conceptions of it, to have been a moſt eminent proof both of the wiſdom and the power of God.

The more we examine into it the more we ſhall be convinced of this great truth. But as there is now no time for any further enquiries of this nature, I ſhall diſmiſs the ſubject with this one obſervation—That there is ſo far from being any thing in the doctrine of the croſs that ought to ſhock our underſtandings, or ſtagger our faith, that, on the contrary, it affords us the ſtrongeſt evidences of the truth of our Saviour's pretenſions. He well knew that the Jews expected in their Meſſiah a ſplendid victorious deliverer, and that the heathens loved to be amuſed with philoſophical diſputes and oratorical harangues. Had he therefore been an impoſtor, he would moſt certainly have accommodated his appearance and his doctrines to theſe expectations. But by teaching, living, ſuffering, and dying, in direct contradiction to theſe deep-rooted prepoſſeſſions, he plainly

ſhowed

ſhowed that he depended on the force of truth, and the power of God only, for the ſucceſs of his miſſion. In the ſame manner, after his aſcenſion, when the Apoſtles found that the doctrine of *Chriſt crucified* gave the utmoſt offence to their hearers, was to the "Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks "fooliſhneſs;" had they acted on the principles of mere worldly policy, they would quickly have changed their tone, would have diſſembled, or ſoftened, or concealed this obnoxious article. They would have made uſe of art and management, ſimilar, perhaps, to that which the Jeſuits in China are ſaid to have adopted. It is a charge brought againſt thoſe miſſionaries by ſome writers, and believed by others of conſiderable authority, that, finding the people of that country exceedingly ſcandalized at the doctrine of a crucified Redeemer, they thought it prudent to deny that Chriſt was ever crucified. They affirmed, that it was nothing more than a calumny invented by the Jews, to throw a diſgrace on Chriſtianity. And what did they gain by this ingenious piece of craft? Did they ſecure a better reception for the Goſpel, and

eſtabliſh themſelves more firmly in the good opinion of mankind? Alas! Chriſtianity no longer exiſts in China, and they themſelves no longer exiſt as a ſociety. Such are the effects of worldly policy, and worldly wiſdom. And had the apoſtles acted on the ſame principles, they would have met with the ſame ſucceſs. But *they* purſued the maxims of "that wiſdom which is from "above." Undiſmayed by the offence taken at the doctrine of the croſs, they continued to preach *Chriſt crucified.* They diſdained all the little temporizing arts of accommodation, all unworthy compliances with the prejudices of mankind. They loudly declared to the whole world, that they believed the doctrine of the croſs to be a divine truth, and that they thought it their bounden duty to perſiſt in preaching it, without fear, without diſguiſe, and without reſerve. They were perſuaded that God would ſome way or other take care to proſper his own work, and that notwithſtanding all oppoſition to the contrary, "their labours ſhould not be in vain "in the Lord." The event ſhowed that their reaſoning was juſt, and that they judged right

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in obeying God, rather than humouring the prejudices and caprices of men. The ſucceſsful and triumphant manner in which the Goſpel made its way, notwithſtanding it went *bearing the croſs* of its divine Author, and had all the power, and wealth, and eloquence of the world to oppoſe it, was an irreſiſtible proof, that it was the deſign of Providence, not "by the inticing words of man's wiſ-"dom, but by demonſtration of the Spirit, "and of power, to ſave them that believe; "and, by what was called *the fooliſhneſs of the* "*croſs*, to deſtroy the wiſdom of the wiſe, "and bring to nothing the underſtanding of "the prudent *."

* 1 Cor. ii. 4. and i. 19.

SERMON XI.

JEREMIAH xviii. Part of the 11th Verſe.

THUS SAITH THE LORD: BEHOLD I FRAME EVIL AGAINST YOU. RETURN YE NOW EVERY ONE FROM HIS EVIL WAY, AND MAKE YOUR WAYS AND YOUR DOINGS GOOD.

WE are now once more aſſembled together, to humble ourſelves before Almighty God *: and, ſince we firſt met here for that purpoſe, a moſt awful and alarming change has taken place in the ſituation of our affairs. A few ſucceſſes in the beginning have been followed by a ſeries of misfortunes. Our dangers and diſtreſſes have multiplied on every ſide. All our efforts to extricate ourſelves from the difficulties with which we are

* On the general faſt in 1779.

ſurrounded, have proved ineffectual. And the proſpect before us is upon the whole ſufficiently dark and uncomfortable.

Let us turn our eyes from it to another object; to ourſelves I mean, to our own conduct. Will that afford us any conſolation? "When the judgments of the Lord are in "the earth," we are told that "the inha- "bitants of the world will learn righteouſ- "neſs *." Have thoſe judgements which now preſs ſo heavy upon us, taught us this moſt uſeful leſſon? In proportion as our calamities have multiplied, has the warmth of our piety encreaſed, and our ſins and our follies melted away before it? Twice already have we, in this place, and on this very occaſion, addreſſed ourſelves to the Throne of Grace; have, with every appearance of ſorrow and contrition, confeſſed our ſins, and acknowledged that they have moſt deſervedly brought down upon us the heavieſt marks of God's diſpleaſure. We have entreated pardon, we have beſought compaſſion, we have implored aſſiſtance and protection; and in return have, in the moſt ſolemn manner, vow-

* Iſaiah xxvi. 9.

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ed repentance and reformation. Have that repentance and reformation followed? Has one ſingle article of luxury been retrenched (retrenched, I mean, from principle) one favourite vice renounced, one place of amuſement, one ſchool of debauchery or of gaming, ſhut up? Do we keep a ſtricter guard upon all our irregular appetites and deſires, and reſtrain them within the bounds of temperance, decency, and duty? Are the obligations of the nuptial vow more faithfully obſerved, and fewer applications made to the legiſlature for the diſſolution of that ſacred bond? Is there a more plain and marked difference in our behaviour towards the virtuous and the profligate; and have we ſet ourſelves with greater earneſtneſs to repreſs the bold effrontery of vice, by treating it, wherever it is found, with the indignation and contempt which it deſerves? Are we become in any degree more religious, more devout, more diſengaged from this world, more intent upon the next? Are our hearts touched with a livelier apprehenſion of heavenly things, with warmer ſentiments of love and reverence for our Maker; and do we demonſtrate the ſincerity of that love,

love, by a more exact obedience to his commands and a more ſerious regard to that ſacred day, which is peculiarly dedicated to his ſervice? Happy would it be for every one of us, could theſe queſtions be anſwered truly in the affirmative. But if they cannot, for what purpoſe have we again reſorted to this ſolemnity? Do we think that the abſtinence, the ſorrow, or the ſupplications *of a day*, will avail us? In a country ſo enlightened as this is, it is impoſſible that any one can deceive himſelf with ſuch imaginations as theſe. If we come here to ſay a form of prayer for mere form's ſake; if our devotion is put on for the occaſion, and put off the moment we leave this place; if we are ſerious for a few hours once in a year, and as diſſipated as ever all the reſt of our lives; ſuch annual ſhows of piety, ſuch periodical fits of devotion, inſtead of being a humiliation before God, are a mockery and inſult upon him; and our very prayers will be among the ſins for which we ought to beg forgiveneſs. The prayers to which HE liſtens, are thoſe only that ſpring form a broken and a contrite heart: the ſorrow that HE accepts, is that only which worketh repentance:

pentance: the abſtinence which he requires, is abſtinence from ſin. Unleſs we renounce each of us our own peculiar wickedneſs, our profeſſions here do nothing: they do worſe than nothing; they add hypocriſy to all our other ſins. "This people," ſays God on a ſimilar occaſion, "draw near to me with their "mouth, and with their lips do honour me, "but have removed their heart far from me: "and their fear towards me is taught by the "precept of men. Their goodneſs is as a "morning cloud, and as the early dew it "goeth away. When they faſt, I will not "hear their cry, and when they offer an "oblation, I will not accept them *. Be- "cauſe I have called, and ye refuſed, I have "ſtretched out my hand, and no man regard- "ed; but ye have ſet at nought my counſel, "and would none of my reproof; I alſo will "laugh at your calamity, I will mock when "your fear cometh. When your fear com- "eth as a deſolation, and your deſtruction "cometh as a whirlwind, when diſtreſs and "anguiſh cometh upon you; then ſhall they "call upon me, but I will not anſwer, they

* Iſaiah xxix. 13. Hoſea vi. 41. Jer. xiv. 12.

"ſhall

" ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find " me; for that they hated knowledge, and " did not chuſe the fear of the Lord *."

All this, I am aware, when applied to ourſelves, will be conſidered by many as nothing more than the uſual language of the pulpit; as a little pious declamation, neceſſary to be uſed on ſuch occaſions as this, but meaning nothing, and calculated only to ſtrike ſuperſtitious minds, which ſee divine judgements in every common occurrence of life.

This is neither the time nor the place for entering into any controverſy on ſuch ſubjects. We are come here, I apprehend, not to diſpute God's moral government of the world, but to acknowledge it. They who do not acknowledge it, have no concern here. Yet even theſe, when they happen to reflect a little ſeriouſly on what we were a very few years ago, and what we now are; when they conſider the means by which this ſudden and ſurpriſing revolution has been brought about; when they look back to the origin, and trace the whole progreſs, of that unhappy conteſt

* Prov. i. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29.

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in which we have been ſo long engaged, find themſelves obliged to own, that there is ſomething very extraordinary in it; that it has in many inſtances gone far out of the uſual track of human affairs; that the cauſes generally aſſigned, are totally inadequate to the effects produced; and that is it altogether one of the moſt amazing ſcenes that was ever preſented to the obſervation of mankind. They allow it is impoſſible to account, in any common way, for every thing that has happened in the various ſtages of it; and talk much of accident, ill-fortune, and a certain ſtrange fatality (as they call it) which ſeems to attend even our beſt-concerted meaſures. Let thoſe who can, digeſt ſuch reaſoning as this, and diſguiſe ſuch ignorance of the truth, or their unwillingneſs to own it, under the ſhelter of unmeaning names, and imaginary beings of their own creation. But let us, who are, I truſt, a little better informed, confeſs, what it is in vain to deny, *that the hand of God is upon us*; that we wanted humbling, and have been moſt ſeverely humbled. The ſucceſſes of the laſt war * were too great for our feeble

* That which was concluded by the peace of 1763.

virtue

virtue to bear. The immenſe wealth that they poured in upon us from every quarter of the globe, bore down before it every barrier of morality and religion, and produced a ſcene of wanton extravagance and wild exceſs, which called loudly for ſome ſignal check; and that check it has now received. It would be the extremity of blindneſs not to ſee, in thoſe calamities that have befallen us, the workings of that over-ruling power, "which chuſes the fooliſh things of "the world to confound the wiſe, and the "weak things of the world to confound the "things that are mighty, that no fleſh "ſhould glory in his preſence *." It is plainly the voice of God that ſpeaks to us, in the ſublime and tremendous language of ſcripture; "Hear this, thou that art full of "ſtirs, a tumultuous city, a joyous city; "thou that art given to pleaſures, that "dwelleſt careleſsly, and ſayeſt in thine "heart, I am, and none elſe beſide me; "Though thou exalt thyſelf as the eagle, and "though thou ſet thy neſt amongſt the ſtars,

* 1 Cor. i. 27, 29.

"thence

" thence will I bring thee down, ſaith the " Lord. Can thy heart endure, or can thy " hands be ſtrong, in the days that I ſhall " deal with thee? I the Lord have ſpoken " it, and will do it. I will mingle a " PERVERSE SPIRIT in the midſt of thee, " I WILL CAUSE THEE TO ERR IN EVERY " WORK *."

Whether we have not thus ERRED, I leave you to judge; and if our errors are here referred to to their right ſource, we know the remedy. It is, God be thanked, in our own hands: it is what this day's ſolemnity was meant to remind us of; it is what the text itſelf very diſtinctly points out to us. " Re- " turn ye now every one from his evil way, " and make your ways and your doings " good." Liſten then, I beſeech you, to this moſt ſalutary advice, and " humble your- " ſelves under the mighty hand of God, that " he may exalt you in due time †."

But is any one then (we ſhall be aſked) ſo weak as to imagine, that immediate reforma-

* Iſaiah xxii. 2; xlvii. 8. Obad. 4 Ezek. xxii. 14. Iſaiah xix. 14.

† 1 Pet. v.

tion

tion will be followed by an immediate declaration of Heaven in our favour, and that the moment we become religious and virtuous, we ſhall be ſecured from danger, and rewarded with ſucceſs? The beſt, indeed the only proper anſwer to ſuch a queſtion as this, is—MAKE THE TRIAL. It may be made without either expence or hazard; and ſurely, in our preſent ſituation, every thing that affords the leaſt ſhadow of relief, deſerves our notice. Expedient after expedient has been tried, and failed. Above all things, we have tried what IRRELIGION will do for us; and we have no reaſon, I think, to be proud of the experiment. It is then high time, ſurely, to diſcard a phyſician that has done us ſo little good, to make a change in our medicines, and put ourſelves under a different regimen. And what other regimen can we adopt, but that which is recommended to us by the great phyſician of our ſouls? It is RELIGION, "pure undefiled religion," that will ſtrike at the root of our diſorder, and nothing elſe can. To ſee its influence ſuddenly and univerſally reſtored, is more, perhaps, than we can expect. As the depravation of our manners,

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and the decay of vital piety amongſt us, has been a gradual work, the recovery of them muſt be ſo too. But let every one begin to do ſomething towards it; let all parties and denominations of men, inſtead of inveighing againſt each other, without mercy and without end, reform themſelves; and the reſtitution of religious ſentiment, and virtuous practice, will not be ſo difficult an atchievement as is imagined. It behoves us, in the firſt place, the miniſters of the Goſpel, from the higheſt to the loweſt, to redouble our attention to every branch of our ſacred functions, and to take the lead, as we are bound to do, in the great work of reformation. As an indiſpenſable requiſite towards it, let us be careful to impreſs deeply, both upon our own minds and thoſe of our hearers, the abſolute neceſſity of faith in Chriſt, of fervent love towards God, of internal ſanctification by his Spirit; and on this foundation, the only ſolid and ſubſtantial one that can be laid, let us erect the ſuperſtructure of a holy, religious, Chriſtian life. Let thoſe who direct our public meaſures remember, that their ſucceſs muſt, in a great degree, depend on the purity

and integrity, not only of their political, but of their moral and religious conduct; and that "except the Lord keep the city, the "watchman waketh but in vain *." If therefore they leave the Supreme Governor of the world out of their counſels, and form plans independent of him and his Providence, there is but too much reaſon to fear, that all the efforts of human wiſdom and power, the moſt vigorous exertions of national ſtrength, the beſt appointed fleets and armies, will avail them nothing; for "the battle is not their's, "but God's †." Let their opponents, on the other hand, be no leſs attentive to the regulation of their own hearts, than to the conduct of thoſe who govern; and contend with them not merely for the vain diſtinctions of rank, or wealth, or power, but for that nobleſt object of human ambition, pre-eminence in virtue. To all this, let thoſe who are diſtinguiſhed by their birth and fortune, add the weight, the almoſt irreſiſtible weight, of their example; and manifeſt their public ſpirit in the moſt uſeful way they can, by letting the light of their truly illuſtrious

* Pſalm cxxvii. 1. † 2 Chron. xx. 15.

conduct

conduct "ſhine before men," and by becoming models of every thing that is great and good. Let all parents, in fine, while they are ſo anxious to embelliſh the manners, and improve the underſtandings, of their children, pay a little more attention than they have hitherto done, to the cultivation of their hearts. From their infancy to their manhood, let them be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the "Lord *." Let thoſe grand corrupters of their unguarded innocence and ſimplicity, licentious NOVELS, licentious HISTORIES, and licentious ſyſtems of PHILOSOPHY, which (not to mention thoſe of our own growth) have conſtituted a large and moſt pernicious branch of our commerce with a neighbouring kingdom; let theſe, I ſay, be for ever baniſhed from the hands of our youth, and in their room, let that long-neglected, and almoſt forgotten thing, REVEALED RELIGION, make a fundamental part of their education. Let them not be left (as is too much, God knows, the caſe) to pick it up themſelves, as well as they can, from caſual

* Epheſ. vi. 4.

information, or a few ſuperficial unconnected inſtructions; but let it be taught them ſyſtematically and methodically; let the firſt rudiments of it be inſtilled as early and as carefully into their minds, as thoſe of every other ſcience; let its evidences and its doctrines be gradually explained to them, in the ſeveral ſeminaries of learning through which they ſucceſſively paſs, in proportion as their judgments ripen, and their underſtandings unfold themſelves. Let them, in ſhort, be made not only great ſcholars, and accompliſhed gentlemen, but, what is of infinitely more importance, both to themſelves and to the public, honeſt men, and ſincere Chriſtians.

By means ſuch as theſe, together with our moſt earneſt prayers for the aſſiſtance of Divine Grace to co operate with our own endeavours, there is little doubt but a great and a bleſſed change may in time be brought about, in the manners even of the preſent generation, and ſtill more of the riſing one. And when once the ſenſe of religion is effectually awakened in our ſouls, we have every reaſon in the world to expect the happieſt conſequences from it.

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The declarations of ſcripture on this head are peremptory and deciſive. "At what in-"ſtant" (ſays God) "I ſhall ſpeak concern-"ing a nation, and concerning a kingdom, "to pluck up and to pull down, and to de-"ſtroy it, if that nation, againſt whom I "have pronounced, turn from their evil, I "will repent of the evil which I thought to "do unto them *." But, beſides the reviving hopes which theſe promiſes may well inſpire, there are other very important advantages that will naturally and ſpontaneouſly flow from a ſincere belief in the doctrines, and a general obedience to the laws, of the Goſpel.

I. In the firſt place, true Chriſtianity will produce TRUE PATRIOTISM AND PUBLIC SPIRIT. By its commanding influence over the ſoul, "it will keep under, and bring "into ſubjection †," all thoſe irregular paſſions which render men rapacious, ſordid, ſelfiſh, and corrupt, indifferent and inattentive to the public, devoted ſolely to the purſuit of ſome favourite object, or the gratifica-

* Jer. xviii, 7, 8. † 1 Cor. ix, 27.

tion of ſome implacable reſentment, to which they are at any time ready to proſtitute their conſciences, and ſacrifice the true intereſt of their country. From all theſe vile impediments to the diſcharge of our duty, Chriſtianity ſets us free, and ſubſtitutes in their room, the nobleſt and moſt generous ſentiments. It gives that dignity and elevation of ſoul, which is ſuperior to every undue influence, either of popularity or of power. It lays down, as the foundation of all diſintereſted conduct, that great evangelical virtue, SELF-DENIAL: it teaches us to deny, to renounce ourſelves; to throw entirely out of our thoughts, our own prejudices, intereſts, and paſſions; and in every public queſtion, to ſee nothing, to regard nothing, but the real welfare of our country, and that plain line of duty, which no honeſt man can miſtake. To this it adds unbounded love for all, but eſpecially "the brotherhood *;" that is, the community of which we are members. It extends our proſpect beyond the preſent ſcene of things, and ſets before us the recompences of a future life; which,

* 1 Pet. ii. 17.

as

as they make us *richer*, enable us to be more *generous*, than other men. They whoſe views are wholly centered in this world, will too often prefer the emoluments of it to every other conſideration: but they who look towards an inheritance in another ſtate of exiſtence, can *afford* to give up to the general welfare, a few advantages in this.

II. When once we have thoroughly imbibed the true ſpirit and temper of the Goſpel, it will ſoon produce what is eſſential to our preſervation, UNANIMITY; will compoſe all thoſe unhappy diſſenſions which have ſo long torn the ſtate in pieces; which have been one principal cauſe of our preſent evils; and, if not timely extinguiſhed, or at leaſt greatly mitigated, will probably lead (as in all great empires they have univerſally led) to final ruin. Now the ſource of this dreadful miſchief lies where few ſeem to ſuſpect, in the want of RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE. Had not all ſides departed, in a greater or leſs degree, from thoſe heavenly precepts of gentleneſs, humility, meekneſs, placability, brotherly kindneſs, moderation, equity, and integrity, which the Goſpel preſcribes, it is

utterly impoſſible that our diviſions could have ariſen to their preſent alarming height. But the misfortune is, we are apt to think ourſelves diſpenſed with, in matters of ſtate, from all thoſe rules of morality, which, in every other caſe, we deem it our duty to obſerve: and, what is quite aſtoniſhing and unaccountable, the very ſame perſons, who in private life are conſiderate, reaſonable, impartial, good-natured, and humane, will, in public affairs, be impetuous, vehement, acrimonious, cenſorious, ungenerous, and unjuſt. On what grounds they eſtabliſh this ſtrange diſtinction, and why they conceive all the obligations of Religion to hold good in the one caſe, and entirely to vaniſh in the other, is to me, I own, utterly incomprehenſible. The Goſpel, I am ſure, knows nothing of any ſuch exceptions as theſe. It lays down the ſame rules of behaviour for all men, in all relations and circumſtances of life; and grants no diſpenſation, in any one ſuppoſable inſtance, from the eternal and invariable laws of evangelical rectitude. It is CHARITY, in ſhort, true Chriſtian Charity, diffuſing itſelf through our whole conduct, public as well

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as private, that can alone reſtore harmony and union to this diſtracted kingdom. Let her mild conciliating voice be once heard and attended to by all ranks of men, and ſhe will ſay to their ruffled paſſions, as our Saviour did to the troubled waves, "Peace, be ſtill:" and the conſequence will be the ſame: "there will be a great calm*."

Laſtly, A conſciouſneſs of having diſcharged our duty, of being at peace with God, and of living under his gracious ſuperintendence, will give us a SPIRIT, A FIRMNESS, AND INTREPIDITY OF SOUL, which nothing elſe can inſpire.

VALOUR indeed, it has been ſaid, is no Chriſtian virtue; and it is very true; for, conſidered ſimply in itſelf, it is no virtue at all. It is a mere perſonal quality, depending principally on conſtitution and natural temparament, but improved by education, diſcipline, and habit; and can be no otherwiſe moral or immoral, than as it is well or ill directed. But, ſuppoſing all other circumſtances equal, the ſincere Chriſtian will have many incitements to face danger with a ſteady counte-

* Mark iv. 39.

nance,

nance, which the irreligious cannot have. Under the defence of the Moſt High, he has leſs cauſe to fear the worſt, and more reaſon to hope the beſt, than thoſe that live without God in the world. "The wicked therefore "flee when no man purſueth, but the righ-"teous are bold as a lion*." Even death itſelf has, to the real Chriſtian, no terrors. The only ſting it has, is ſin, and of that ſting he has diſarmed it. Inſtead of being to him, as it is to the worldly man, the extinction of his hopes, it is the conſummation of them, and puts him in poſſeſſion of thoſe heavenly treaſures on which his heart is fixed. He therefore goes on with cool undaunted compoſure to the diſcharge of his duty, whatever difficulties, whatever dangers may ſtand in his way; conſcious that he is acting under the eye of an Almighty Being, who can both protect and reward him; who has commanded him, if it be neceſſary, "to lay down his "life for his brethren†;" and who will never ſuffer him to be a loſer in the end, even by that laſt and greateſt ſacrifice to the public good.

* Prov. xxviii. 1. † 1 John iii. 16.

Such

Such are the effects, the genuine and natural effects, of RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE on the human mind. It will give us, as we have ſeen, every thing which our preſent ſituation ſeems more peculiarly to require; PUBLIC SPIRIT, UNANIMITY, AND UNSHAKEN FORTITUDE. Embrace then, with thankfulneſs, the ſupport which Chriſtianity offers you, and which you have hitherto ſought elſewhere in vain. Amidſt ſo many enemies, take care to ſecure, at leaſt, one friend. By obedience to the Divine laws, recommend yourſelves to the Divine protection; and then remember thoſe moſt comfortable expreſſions of the Almighty to another people: "How can I give thee up, Ephraim? my "ſoul is turned within me. I will not exe- "cute the fierceneſs of my anger; for I am "God, and not man *." "In a little wrath "I hid my face from thee for a moment, "but with everlaſting kindneſs will I have "mercy on thee †."

* Hoſ. xi. 8, 9. † Iſ. liv. 8.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

MATTH. X. 34.

THINK NOT THAT I AM COME TO SEND PEACE ON EARTH; I CAME NOT TO SEND PEACE, BUT A SWORD.

WE may, without the ſmalleſt heſitation, conclude, that the words of the text cannot poſſibly have that ſignification which at the firſt view, and as they here ſtand ſingle and unconnected, they appear to have. It would be the extremity of weakneſs to ſuppoſe, that he whoſe whole life and doctrine breathed nothing but peace and gentleneſs, and who declared at another time, in the moſt poſitive terms, that "he came not to deſtroy men's lives, "but to ſave them*," ſhould here mean

* Luke ix. 56.

to

to denounce war and desolation to the human species. And that, in fact, this is not the real import of the words before us, will be evident to any one who considers, with the least degree of attention, the whole passage from which they were taken, and the occasion on which they were spoken. It will be evident that they relate solely to the *first preachers of the Gospel*, to whom our Lord was then delivering their evangelical commission; and were intended to apprize them of the calamities and persecutions to which the execution of that commission would infallibly expose them. "They were sent forth as sheep "among wolves; they were to be delivered "up to the councils, to be scourged in the "synagogues, to be brought before gover-"nors and kings, to be hated of all men for "Christ's sake*: a treatment so totally opposite to that which their early prejudices led them to expect under the Messiah, THE PRINCE OF PEACE†, that it was highly necessary to set them right in this important point; and to forewarn them in plain terms, that although the *ultimate* effect of Christia-

* Matth. x. 16---22. † Isaiah ix. 6.

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nity would indeed be PEACE in its utmoſt extent, and in every ſenſe of the word, yet that to thoſe who were charged with the firſt promulgation of the Goſpel, it would bring not *peace*, but a *ſword*.

But whatever interpretation may be given to theſe words, ſay the adverſaries of our faith, they are eventually applicable to Chriſtianity in their moſt obvious meaning. The Goſpel did in fact *ſend a ſword*, and a moſt deſtructive one, upon earth. It has deluged the world with blood. It has been the parent of as much miſery and devaſtation, as if it had been purpoſely intended to harraſs and torment mankind, and has given riſe to more diſſenſions, wars, and maſſacres, than any other cauſe that can be named *.

This, it muſt be owned, is a formidable charge. But formidable as it is, and height-

* This argument is ſo great a favourite with all our philoſophical ſceptics, that it is every day dreſſed up in ſome new form, and repeated inceſſantly with an air of peculiar triumph and exultation. It is indeed in its very nature calculated to ſtrike more generally, and to make deeper impreſſions, than any abſtract reaſoning; and has, I believe, in fact, created ſtronger prejudices againſt the Goſpel, than all the other cavils of infidelity put together. For theſe reaſons it ſeemed to deſerve particular conſideration.

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ened, as it ſeldom fails to be, with all the invidious colourings of falſe rhetoric and falſe wit, we need not fear to meet it in its full force. It will, I apprehend, be no difficult matter to convince every diſpaſſionate enquirer, that when it is examined more cloſely and minutely, when it is diveſted of all the adventitious terrors with which it has been ſo induſtriouſly ſurrounded, and when all the abatements and deductions are made, which truth demands and candour muſt admit, it will be reduced to an objection of little or no importance.

I. Whenever the cruelties exerciſed by Chriſtians againſt unbelievers, or againſt each other, are mentioned, it is generally inſinuated at the ſame time, that they are not to be paralleled in any other religious perſuaſion, and that it was Chriſtianity which firſt introduced the deteſtable practice of perſecuting on account of religion. But how unfair ſuch repreſentations are, the moſt ſuperficial acquaintance with hiſtory is ſufficient to convince us. From the remoteſt ages down to the preſent, men of almoſt every ſect and perſuaſion have treated thoſe of contrary ſentiments

timents with no ſmall degree of bitterneſs and inhumanity. It is well known, that Jews, Pagans, and Mahometans, have each in their turn made uſe of violence and coercion in matters of religion; and that the early Chriſtians ſuffered the ſevereſt perſecution from the two former, long before they began to inflict it on others. This indeed is no vindication of thoſe Chriſtians that had recourſe to it; nor is it intended as ſuch. Nothing ever *can* vindicate or juſtify them. But it may ſerve to ſhow that others ought to bear a large ſhare of that odium which is generally thrown excluſively on the diſciples of Chriſt; and that it is not Chriſtianity, but human nature, that is chargeable with the guilt of perſecution*. The truth is, religion,

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* Even Pagans have perſecuted Pagans on the ſcore of religion, with the utmoſt bitterneſs and rancour. Beſides the memorable inſtance of Socrates, and the ſeveral *holy or ſacred wars* among the Grecian States, which had *ſome mixture* of ſuperſtitious zeal in them, we find that in Egypt the worſhip of different deities produced the moſt implacable hatred and moſt ſanguinary conteſts between their reſpective votaries; that in Perſia the diſciples of every other religion except that of Zoroaſter were puniſhed, and almoſt exterminated, with the utmoſt cruelty; and that in later times the kings of Siam and Pegu

gion, or *the pretence* of religion, has in almoſt all ages and all nations, been *one* cauſe, among many others, of thoſe numberleſs diſſenſions and diſputes which have laid waſte the ſpecies: and although it may be matter of ſurprize to ſome, and of indignation to all, that what was intended for the protection and ſolace of mankind, ſhould be converted to their deſtruction, yet it may be accounted for on the moſt common principles of human conduct.

The attachment of men to any particular object will always increaſe according to the real or ſuppoſed value of that object; and their zeal in defending it from injury or corruption, will riſe in the ſame proportion. Hence religion, which has ever been eſteemed the moſt important of all human concerns, has for that very reaſon given the keeneſt edge to human reſentments, and has wound up the paſſions of men to a degree of phrenzy, to

Pegu contended for the honour of poſſeſſing a certain ſacred relique, (of a nature too contemptible to be named here) with as much fury and obſtinacy, as if the ſafety of their whole kingdoms, and every thing valuable to them, had been at ſtake. See *Plutarch in Solon. Thucyd. l.* i *Juvenal Sat.* xv. *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol.* i. *p.* 208. *and Mickle's tranſlation of the Luſiad of Camoens, Introduct. p.* 94. *note.*

which

which no motive of leſs weight was capable of raiſing them. And yet, at the ſame time, if we compare the diſſenſions and cruelties occaſioned by *civil zeal*, with thoſe occaſioned by *religious zeal*, we ſhall find the latter to bear a much leſs proportion to the former than is generally imagined, and frequently inſinuated *. By far the greateſt number of wars, as well as the longeſt, moſt obſtinate, moſt extenſive, and moſt ſanguinary wars we know of, have been owing to cauſes *purely political*, and thoſe too ſometimes of the moſt trifling nature; and if we can allow men to harraſs and deſtroy one another for a mere point of honour, or a few acres of land, why ſhould we think it ſtrange to ſee them defending, with the ſame heat and bitterneſs, what they conceive to be the moſt eſſential requiſite to happineſs, both here and hereafter? If we will but conſider religion in that ſingle

* "*Political Society*, on a moderate calculation, has been the means of murdering ſeveral times the number of inhabitants now upon the earth." See that admirable piece of irony, *A Vindication of Natural Society*; in which the argument againſt Chriſtianity, drawn from the miſchiefs occaſioned by religious bigotry and perſecution, is moſt ingeniouſly and compleatly overthrown.

point of view, which is the only one that has any relation to this queſtion, *as an object which men have very much at heart*; and will admit the operation of the ſame paſſions and prejudices as are excited by any *other* object that they have at heart, we ſhall no longer be at a loſs for the ſource of thoſe miſchiefs that have been aſcribed to it.

II. And, as the nature of the human mind furniſhes a very obvious reaſon for religious bigotry, and cruelty in general, ſo may we, from the peculiar circumſtances and ſituation of the earlier Chriſtians, account for the origin of *their* propenſity to it in particular.

Exceſs of happineſs, or exceſs of miſery, is frequently obſerved to give a ſavage turn to the temper. From the one, the mind is apt to contract a kind of hardneſs, and from the other a wantonneſs, which render it equally inſenſible to the feelings of humanity. It was from the agonies of a death-bed, amidſt the pains of a moſt loathſome diſeaſe, and the ſtill more inſupportable torments of a wounded conſcience, looking back on a life full of iniquity, that Herod gave orders for all the principal Jews to be maſſacred the moment he

he expired *. And it was, on the contrary, from the midſt of a luxurious and a voluptuous court, abounding with every thing that could miniſter to eaſe, magnificence, and delight, that the ſcourge of the laſt century, Louis the XIVth, gave orders for turning into a deſert, the country of a prince, whoſe only crime it was to be his enemy †. So ſimilar are the effects which flow from theſe two oppoſite extremes.

Both theſe extremes the Chriſtian church experienced, about the time we are ſpeaking of, and, what was ſtill more trying, experienced them in a very quick ſucceſſion. The members of that church, from being perſecuted, tormented, afflicted, and treated as the off-ſcourings of the earth, became on a ſudden the lords of it. Some, perhaps, *may* have fortitude enough to ſupport great miſery, or, what is perhaps no leſs difficult, extreme

* Joſephus. Antiq. l. xvii. c. 6.

† Monſ. Voltaire, though a Frenchman, and of courſe an admirer of Louis, yet ſpeaks of this barbarous devaſtation of the Palatinate in the terms it deſerves. The natural and affecting picture he draws of that ſhocking ſcene, muſt ſtrike every heart with horror. *Eſſai ſur l'Hiſtoire Gènèrale, tom.* v. 6, 16.

happineſs, without any injury to their tempers. But it is very few that can bear a rapid tranſition from the one to the other, from indigence, diſtreſs, and oppreſſion, to eaſe, ſecurity, and power. It was too much for the diſciples even of the meek and humble Jeſus. One might have thought, perhaps, that upon the civil eſtabliſhment of their religion, the recent ſenſe of their own ſufferings would have taught them a leſſon of mildneſs and moderation towards others. But it unhappily taught them the very ſame leſſon that it has generally taught to every other people in the ſame circumſtances, in all ages of the world. For it is a fact too notorious to be denied, that in moſt contentions for ſuperiority, whether religious or civil, the ſuffering party, when raiſed to power by a reverſe of fortune, has ſcarce ever failed to adopt that inhumanity under which they ſo lately groaned; and it is not ſo much oppreſſion that is cruſhed, as the oppreſſor that is changed. Every one will, upon this occaſion, recall to mind the well-known ſanguinary ſtruggles for power between the two rivals ſtates of Greece, and the ſtill more ſanguinary

nary revolutions in the latter periods of the Roman republic; where the only conteſt ſeemed to be, which ſhould exceed the other in cruelty; and where the remembrance of former maſſacres was obliterated, not by acts of mercy and forgiveneſs, but by maſſacres ſtill more furious and unrelenting, by the almoſt entire annihilation of the vanquiſhed faction.

When, therefore, our adverſaries ſay that the Chriſtians made no other uſe of the new-acquired aſſiſtance of the civil arm, than to harraſs one another, and oppreſs their enemies, what elſe do they ſay, than that Chriſtians were men; that they only did what *men of all religions and denominations* have commonly done under the ſame circumſtances and temptations; and that the ſpirit of the Goſpel was left in the corruption of human nature *?

It might have been expected, indeed, that the excellence of their religion ſhould have

* We find that even Julian, the *philoſophic* Julian, though not a Chriſtian, yet by ſome means or other became a moſt zealous bigot and perſecutor. He was of opinion, it ſeems, that a *frantic patient* (that is a Chriſtian) might ſometimes be cured by *ſalutary violence*. He applied this remedy himſelf with no ſmall degree of alacrity and vigour, and in ſome parts of his dominions allowed his provincial miniſters to exerciſe the moſt

reſtrained them from the common exceſſes of their ſpecies, and rendered them as much ſuperior to other men in humanity and tenderneſs, as the benevolence of the Goſpel was to that of every other religious inſtitution in the world. And certain it is that Chriſtianity did by degrees ſoften and mitigate the ferocity of the human mind. But this was not to be done on the ſudden, in large bodies of men and extenſive empires. It could not, without a miracle, inſtantaneouſly change the temper of the times, and bring about in a moment an entire revolution in the prevailing diſpoſition and eſtabliſhed character of thoſe ages. The Roman emperors and their armies had for

moſt brutal acts of cruelty towards the Chriſtians with impunity, nay ſometimes with applauſe. He even added inſult to oppreſſion. He condeſcended to employ againſt the *deteſted Galilean* (as he was pleaſed to call the Chriſtians) the acrimony of his imperial pen, and made them feel, not only the whole weight of his ſovereign power, but the utmoſt ſeverity of his *ironical and ſarcaſtic wit*. See Mr Gibbon's Hiſt. of the Decline, &c. vol. ii. p. 370. to 409. The *philoſophers* were the chief inſtigators of the perſecution of the Chriſtians under Dioclefian; and Mr. Hume acknowledges, that the moſt refined and *philoſophic* ſects, are conſtantly the moſt intolerant. With what juſtice then can "*philoſophy* alone boaſt that her gentle hand is able to eradicate from the human mind the latent and deadly principle of fanaticiſm?" Ib. vol. i. ch. 8. n. 24. vol. ii. p. 505. and vol. i. p. 569

many

many centuries been accuſtomed to violence, war, diſſenſion, and tumult. They had been accuſtomed alſo to ſee every thing bend to their power, and obey their commands. When, therefore, they became legiſlators in RELIGION, as well as in every thing elſe, they would carry the ſame ideas along with them, even into that ſubject. They would expect a ſubmiſſion as complete and abſolute in that point as in every other; and, if the ſmalleſt reſiſtance was made to their ſovereign will and pleaſure, they would be very apt to apply the ſame means to ſubdue ſtubborn conſciences, which they had found ſo ſucceſsful in ſubduing provinces and kingdoms. Thus did force come to be conſidered as the propereſt and moſt effectual argument in religious as well as in civil conteſts. The eccleſiaſtics would naturally be carried away in the general current, with all the other ſubjects of the Roman empire, and adopt the predominant ſentiments and habits of their countrymen. And it would require a conſiderable length of time, and much juſter conceptions of the true character and genius of the Goſpel than many of its teachers then entertained, to correct

rect thoſe inveterate prejudices, and ſubdue thoſe turbulent paſſions, which had taken ſuch firm hold upon their minds.

III. With theſe obſtacles in the way, it was hardly poſſible for the mild and benevolent principles of Chriſtianity to produce any *immediate* effect. And their operation was moſt unfortunately ſtill further obſtructed by another cauſe, which took place in the ſucceeding ages. Thoſe northern barbarians, who, not long after the civil eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, invaded and overran the weſtern empire, brought in with them a ſpirit of cruelty and martial violence, which was propagated with their dominions, and communicated from the conquerors to thoſe they conquered. Their ſavage manners added freſh fuel to that ſternneſs of diſpoſition which had deſcended to the Chriſtians of thoſe ages from their Roman anceſtors. At the ſame time, by declaring open war againſt all learning, ſacred or profane, they in a great meaſure precluded thoſe whom they had vanquiſhed from the only effectual remedy that could be applied to that barbarity which they taught them. They rendered

dered it almoſt impoſſible for them to acquire a compleat knowledge and a right apprehenſion of the true temper of the Goſpel, whoſe mild and gracious influence could alone rectify their errors and purify their hearts. No wonder then, that when this influence was in a great meaſure loſt, when the ſcriptures were ſhut up in an unknown tongue, when the cultivation of letters, and eſpecially of all critical and biblical learning, was at an end, when Gothic brutality was ingrafted on Roman fierceneſs, and every thing tended to inflame and exaſperate the moſt furious paſſions of the ſoul; no wonder that the beneficent genius of Chriſtianity could not operate with its full and genuine force on the manners of thoſe times. Yet ſtill, notwithſtanding all thoſe diſadvantages, when the barbarians themſelves became converts to the faith, it did in fact produce an effect, which no other cauſe was powerful enough to produce; it mollified, in many important inſtances, the ferocious temper of thoſe ſavage conquerors, who were thus in their turn ſubdued by the religion of thoſe very enemies whom they had vanquiſhed in the field *. And though, for

* See Hiſt. of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. iii. p. 533, 633.

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the reaſons above aſſigned, the ſpirit of intolerance continued to prevail, and even gradually to gain ground; yet it was not till about the beginning of the thirteenth century, in which darkneſs and barbarity overſpread the face of the whole earth, that this evil arrived at its utmoſt height. It was not till then that the inhuman wars againſt the Albigenſes firſt began, that Chriſtendom became for a long time one continued ſcene of deſolation, that perſecution was reduced to a regular ſyſtem, and murder made legal by that dreadful inſtrument of human fury, the inquiſition; in all which, Chriſtianity had juſt as much ſhare, as ignorance, enthuſiaſm, bigotry, and ſuperſtition, have in the compoſition of genuine Chriſtianity *. And although to us theſe wild exceſſes of miſtaken zeal do now juſtly appear in the moſt odious colours, yet, as they were only of a piece with the general practice of thoſe ages in *other* inſtances, they did not *then* excite in the minds of men any peculiar degree of aſtoniſhment or

* Moſt of the bitter invectives, and eloquent declamations, of both foreign and domeſtic philoſophers, againſt the miſchievous effects of religion, are not objections to *Chriſtianity*, but to *popery*; and though they may embarraſs a Romiſh divine, yet ſeldom create any difficulty to a Proteſtant one.

horror.

horror. At a time when military ideas predominated in every thing, in the form of government, in the temper of the laws, in the tenure of lands, and even in the adminiſtration of juſtice itſelf, it could not be matter of much ſurprize that the church ſhould become military too. And to thoſe who were accuſtomed to ſee (as they then frequently did) a civil right or a criminal charge, nay, even an abſtract point of law*, decided by a combat or a fiery ordeal, inſtead of a legal trial, it would not ſeem at all extraordinary to teach men Chriſtianity by fire and faggot, inſtead of argument and reaſon.

IV. There is ſtill another very material conſideration to be taken into the account.

It is beyond a doubt, that a large part of thoſe diſſenſions, wars, and maſſacres, which have been uſually ſtiled religious, and with the entire guilt of which Chriſtianity has been very unjuſtly loaded, have been altogether, or at leaſt in a great meaſure, owing to political cauſes. Nothing has been more common, in all ages, than to ſee faction and ambition aſſuming the maſk of religion, and

* Some very curious inſtances of this may be ſeen in Dr. Robertſon's Hiſtory of Charles V. vol. i. note 22. p. 348. 8vo.

pretending

pretending to fight in the cauſe of God and his church, when they had in reality nothing elſe in view but to create confuſion or eſtabliſh tyranny. It is well known, for inſtance, that the cruſades themſelves, which are generally ſtiled, by way of eminence, the HOLY WARS, took their riſe not from zeal for the Goſpel or reverence for the Holy Land, but from the ambition, avarice, and rapacity, of two moſt turbulent Pontiffs *; that the war of the League, and other civil wars in France, which were commonly ſuppoſed to have religion for their only ſubject, were in fact originally kindled, and principally fomented, by the reſtleſs intrigues and perſonal reſentments of the princes of the blood, and other great leaders of oppoſite factions †; and that the dreadful diſtractions in this country, during the laſt century, were not (as one of our hiſtorians affirms ‡) owing *chiefly* to religious controverſy, but to political cauſes. By what he calls, *the infuſion of theological hatred*, the

* Gregory the VIIth, and Urban the IId.

† See *Davila* throughout; but particularly B. i. and vi. in which he inveſtigates with great ſagacity the ſecret ſprings of thoſe diſturbances.

‡ Hume, Hiſt. of England, 4to vol. v. p. 255.

fore

ſore was not *made*, but only *inflamed*; and although Cromwell, with much ſolemnity, affected, in every ſtage of his guilty progreſs, to be only *ſeeking the Lord*, yet it ſoon appeared that he was in truth *ſeeking*, what he ultimately obtained, the ſubverſion of the conſtitution, and the acquiſition of ſovereign power.

From theſe, and innumerable other inſtances of a ſimilar nature, which might be produced, it is evident that difference of opinion in matters of faith has much oftener been the *oſtenſible* than the *real* cauſe of the calamities which have been aſcribed to it. But were we even to allow that it has been the true and only ſource of thoſe calamities, yet ſtill the Goſpel itſelf ſtands perfectly clear of all blame on this account. Whatever miſchief perſecution may have done in the world (and it has, God knows, done full enough) it was not Chriſt, but ſome miſtaken followers of Chriſt, that brought this ſword upon earth; and it would be as injurious to aſcribe to revelation the falſe opinions and wrong practices of its diſciples, however pernicious, as to impute to the phyſician the

fatal

fatal miſtakes of thoſe who adminiſtered his medicines. The very beſt laws are liable to be perverted and miſinterpreted. It was the fate of the evangelical law to be ſo. Its ſpirit was miſunderſtood, and its precepts miſapplied, by ſome of its avowed friends, and its authority made uſe of as a cloak for cruelty and oppreſſion by ſome of its ſecret enemies. But the Goſpel all the while was guiltleſs of this blood. It diſclaimed and abhorred ſuch unnatural ſupports, which it was as far from wanting as it was from preſcribing. It authoriſed the uſe of no other means of conviction, but gentleneſs and perſuaſion; and if any of its diſciples were, by a miſguided zeal, betrayed into violent and ſanguinary meaſures, the blame is all their own, and it is *they* muſt anſwer for it, not Jeſus or his religion.

V. That this is a true repreſentation of the caſe, appears not only from the example and the declarations of our divine lawgiver, and the endleſs exhortations in the ſacred writings to peace, love, mercy, compaſſion, and brotherly kindneſs towards all men; but from this conſideration alſo, that in proportion

tion as the ſcriptures came to be more ſtudied, and Chriſtianity of courſe better underſtood, intolerance loſt ground continually, and grew leſs violent in every ſucceſſive age. And no ſooner did the revival of letters, and the reformation of ſome parts of the Chriſtian church, diſperſe that Ægyptian darkneſs in which all Europe had been ſo long involved, than juſter notions, and milder ſentiments of religion, began immediately to take place. That hideous ſpectre PERSECUTION, which had terrified all the world during the night of univerſal ignorance, now ſhrunk at the approach of day: and when, upon the tranſlation of the Bible into ſeveral languages then in vulgar uſe, every Proteſtant, with delight and aſtoniſhment, heard the ſcriptures ſpeak to him, *in his own tongue wherein he was born* *, he immediately felt the heavenly influence upon his ſoul; and, as the ſacred writings opened more and more upon him, found his heart gradually melt within him into tenderneſs, compaſſion, and love towards every human being, of whatever denomination, party, ſect, or perſuaſion.

* Acts ii. 8.

VI. From that time to the preſent, the divine principle of charity has been continually acquiring freſh ſtrength. In every reformed, that is, in every enlightened, country, the native mildneſs of Chriſtianity has evidently ſhown itſelf in a greater or a leſs degree; and by ſubduing, or at leaſt greatly mitigating, the ſpirit of intolerance, has demonſtrated to all the world, that the genuine tendency of its doctrines and its precepts, when rightly underſtood, is not to bring *deſtruction* but *peace* upon earth. Theſe happy conſequences of a better acquaintance with revelation ſeem to be gradually making their way into other kingdoms. Even that church which was the original parent, and is ſtill in ſome countries the chief ſupport, of perſecution, has of late appeared to feel ſome ſmall relentings of humanity, and to abate a little of its native implacability. One of the firmeſt ſupports of its tyranny, the ſociety of Jeſuits, is now no more, and many other of its religious communities are approaching gently to their diſſolution *. In two of the moſt

* In France, Germany, Venice, and many parts of Italy, ſeveral religious houſes have within the laſt ten or twenty years

moſt bigotted and ſuperſtitious countries of Europe *, the inquiſition has not of late years exhibited any of thoſe public ſpectacles of cruelty and horror, with which it uſed formerly to aſtoniſh all the world. In ſome places it has loſt or laid aſide almoſt all its terrors; and in other Popiſh kingdoms the Proteſtants are ſaid to enjoy a much greater degree of ſecurity and eaſe than they have known for many years †. Theſe circumſtances ſeem to indicate, that the odious ſpirit of intolerance is almoſt every where dying away, and that the whole Chriſtian world is gradually approaching to that liberal and merciful way of thinking, which is ſo conformable to the precepts of their divine maſter, and ſo eſſential to the mutual com-

years been ſuppreſſed. Smaller communities have been thrown together. In ſome, none are allowed to take the vows under a certain age, nor to give up to the convent more than a certain part of their property; others are abſolutely forbid to admit any more novices.

* Spain and Portugal.

† In Poland, France, Bohemia, and Hungary. In the two laſt, as well as in all the other Auſtrian dominions, the preſent Emperor ſeems to be taking very deciſive ſteps towards a complete toleration, and an almoſt entire renunciation of the papal juriſdiction within his territories.

fort and tranquillity of all his diſciples. Certain at leaſt it is, that in every country where the reformation has made its way, the more Chriſtianity has been ſtudied, and its true nature and diſpoſition developed, the more benevolent and merciful it has conſtantly appeared to be. The Church of England, in particular, has been diſtinguſhed no leſs for the moderation and lenity of its conduct, than for the purity of its doctrines. And although, after it had ſhaken off the galling yoke of Popery, it could not on a ſudden diveſt itſelf of all its antient hereditary prejudices; although it was a conſiderable length of time before it could fancy itſelf ſecure againſt the Proteſtant ſeparatiſts, without that body-guard of pains and penalties with which it had been accuſtomed to ſee itſelf, as well as every church in Europe, ſurrounded; yet even in the plenitude of its authority, and when its ideas and its exerciſe of eccleſiaſtical diſcipline were at the higheſt, it ſtands chargeable with fewer acts of extreme and extravagant ſeverity than any other eſtabliſhed church, of the ſame magnitude and power, in the whole Chriſtian world. By degrees,

degrees, however, as it improved in knowledge, it improved in mildneſs too. The laſt century ſaw *the beginning*, and the preſent times have ſeen *the farther extenſion*, of a moſt noble ſyſtem of religious liberty, which has placed legal toleration on its true baſis; a meaſure no leſs conſonant to ſound policy than to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and from which we may reaſonably promiſe ourſelves the moſt pacific and ſalutary effects. Let us then continue to maintain the character we have ſo juſtly acquired, of being the great ſupporters of religious freedom and the ſacred rights of conſcience; let us make allowances for the natural prejudices of thoſe who differ from us, and "forbear one another in love." There is, indeed, ſomething very delightful in the idea of the whole Chriſtian world uniting in every article of faith and practice, and agreeing no leſs in inward ſentiment than in outward form. But this, I fear, is a viſionary ſcene of unity and concord, which we have no reaſon to expect from any promiſes of ſcripture, and ſtill leſs from any principles of human nature. But there is an unity very conſiſtent with the one, and very forcibly re-

commended by the other, " the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace *." This is that truly Chriſtian bond, which, linking together every heart, leaves every judgement free, and, from the ſeeming diſcord of many different parts, makes up the entire conſent and harmony of the whole.

By a conduct formed on theſe evangelical principles, we ſhall give the moſt effectual anſwer to the great objection which has been here combated, and the fulleſt confirmation to the ſeveral propoſitions that have been advanced, and I truſt eſtabliſhed, in this diſcourſe. We ſhall confute by *example*, as well as by argument, the heavy charges of cruelty which have been ſo often urged againſt the religion we profeſs. We ſhall ſhow (in perfect conformity to the preceding obſervations) that theſe cruelties are in fact no juſt ground of reproach to the Goſpel; that they are imputable only to thoſe who have totally miſapprehended or wilfully perverted its doctrines and its precepts; that the conſtitutional temper of the Chriſtian revelation is not SEVERITY, but MERCY; and that although

* Epheſ. iv. 3.

this

this was for a while obſtructed or ſuſpended by the operation of adventitious cauſes, and the influence of local and accidental circumſtances, yet theſe having now either wholly ceaſed, or loſt much of their original force, the divine benevolence of our religion has evidently begun, in this and many other countries, to produce its genuine effects. And we have every reaſon to believe, that, as ſcriptural knowledge advances, theſe effects will diffuſe themſelves, though perhaps by ſlow degrees, over the whole Chriſtian world; that "the kingdom of God" ſhall finally appear to be, in a temporal as well as a ſpiritual ſenſe, what the ſcriptures affirm it to be, JOY AND PEACE *; and the effect of righteouſneſs, QUIETNESS AND ASSURANCE FOR EVER †.

* Rom. xiv. 17. † Iſ. xxxii. 17.

SERMON XIII.

LUKE ii. 14.

ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD-WILL TOWARDS MEN.

THE ſacred hymn, of which the text is a part, is that which the heavenly hoſt were heard to ſing at the birth of Chriſt; and the meaning of the words is generally allowed to be, That this great event would be productive of peace to all the inhabitants of the earth, and was a moſt ſtriking proof of God's good-will to mankind.

One cannot help obſerving with what ſolemnity our bleſſed Redeemer was introduced into the world. He had not indeed any of this world's pomp to follow him. The grandeur that attended him was, like his kingdom,

kingdom, of a ſpiritual nature; and it was a grandeur which ſhamed the pride of earthly magnificence. He was welcomed into life by the united congratulations of thoſe celeſtial ſpirits, whoſe abodes he had juſt quitted, to take upon him the form of a man. It is the only event recorded in hiſtory, that was ever dignified with ſuch rejoicings, except that of the creation. When the "corner-"ſtone" of the earth was laid, the ſacred writers tell us "that the morning ſtars ſang "together, and all the ſons of God ſhouted "for joy *." This *corner-ſtone* † of the *new creation* was laid with the ſame ſolemnity. It ſhould ſeem that theſe were the only two occaſions which deſerved ſo glorious a diſtinction; and that the redemption of mankind appeared to the heavenly hoſt to be a work no leſs glorious to God, and beneficial to man, than their creation. It is indeed in this light that the ſcriptures do all along conſider it. They repreſent it as a *new creation* ‡, as an entrance upon *a new life* §, as the production of a *new man* ‖, and frequently

*Job. xxxviii. 6, 7. † Eph. ii. 20. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. vi. 15. § Rom. vi. 4. ‖ Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10.

ſpeak

ſpeak of it in terms that have a manifeſt alluſion to the firſt formation of all things. Chriſt himſelf is called THE LIGHT of this new world *; and, as the *power and wiſdom* of God are "clearly ſeen in the things that are "made †," in the *natural* world, ſo in reference to the *ſpiritual* world, our Lord is in a ſtill more emphatical manner ſtiled THE POWER OF GOD, AND THE WISDOM OF GOD ‡. And indeed, if to form the goodly fabric of this globe out of a confuſed heap of jarring elements, to raiſe up man from the duſt of the ground, and breathe into him a living ſoul, were a moſt lively diſplay of God's infinite wiſdom and power, it was ſurely no leſs ſtriking a proof of thoſe divine attributes, to find out a way of reconciling his juſtice and his mercy, of bringing peace and ſalvation out of guilt and miſery, and "quickening "us again when dead in treſpaſſes and ſins §." And as our redemption was no leſs glorious to God than our creation, ſo neither was it leſs beneficial to man. We ſhould have had but little reaſon to rejoice in our creation,

* John viii. 12. † Rom. i. 20. ‡ 1. Cor. i. 24.
§ Epheſ. ii. 1.

had

had not God once more "created us to good "works *." Chriſtianity threw open to us another and a better world, "a new heaven "and a new earth †;" it reſtored to us the only things that could make exiſtence worth poſſeſſing, the favour of God, the means of happineſs, and the hopes of immortality.

It is worthy alſo of obſervation, that this mode of celebrating the birth of our Redeemer was moſt remarkably adapted to the character of the Meſſiah, and the nature of the commiſſion with which he was charged. The ancient hiſtorians frequenly affected to uſher in the birth of warriors and conquerors with portents and prodigies of a dreadful nature; commendable in this, at leaſt, that their fictions were well-ſuited to their perſonages, the enemies and deſtroyers of mankind. The Friend and Saviour of mankind was introduced into the world with declarations of univerſal peace and good-will. And in this the angels only ſpeak the conſtant language of ſcripture in deſcribing the Meſſiah. they ſpeak of him in a manner in which he loves to ſpeak of himſelf, in which the prophets

* Epheſ. ii. 10. † 2 Pet. iii. 13.

ſpoke

ſpoke of him before, and the apoſtles after him. He is called by Iſaiah "THE PRINCE "OF PEACE." "Of the increaſe of his go- "vernment and peace there is ſaid to be no "end *." A little after, his reign is de- ſcribed by the moſt pacific emblems that imagination could furniſh, by "the wolf "dwelling with the lamb, and the leopard "lying down with the kid †." His work of righteouſneſs is peace ‡, and he makes with mankind the covenant of peace §. He himſelf tells his diſciples, that "in him they "were to have peace ‖;" and it is the legacy he bequeaths them, "Peace I leave with "you, my peace I give unto you **." The ſacred writers continue the ſame language in the New Teſtament. "The kingdom of "God is joy and peace ††." His Goſpel is called "the Goſpel of peace ‡‡;" and it is their conſtant ſalutation to the perſons and churches to which they write. So remarkable a frequency and agreement in the uſe and application of this word, naturally raiſe our cu-

* Iſaiah ix. 6. 7. † Ib. xi. 6. ‡ Ib. xxxii. 17.
§ Ib. liv. 10. ‖ John xvi. 33. ** John xiv. 27.
†† Rom. xiv. 17. ‡‡ Ib. x. 15.

rioſity

riosity to enquire into the meaning of it, and make it worth our while to enquire in what ſenſe or ſenſes Chriſt may be ſaid *to have brought peace upon earth:* which will lead us to the proof of the latter part of the text, that his birth was a moſt remarkable inſtance *of God's good-will to mankind.*

I. The firſt and moſt important ſenſe in which our Lord may be ſaid to have brought us *peace*, was, by taking upon him the ſins of the world, and thereby making *our peace with God*, and in conſequence of this, giving us *that peace of mind* which the world could not give. "He is our peace," ſays the apoſtle, "that he might reconcile us to God*." "The chaſtiſement of our peace was upon "him†." "Being juſtified by faith, we "have peace with God through our Lord Je-"ſus Chriſt‡." Expreſſions of this and the like import are ſo frequent in ſcripture, that it is impoſſible for the moſt ingenious criticiſm to elude their force. They evidently prove, that the PEACE which our Saviour "brought on earth," was in its primary acceptation of a *ſpiritual* nature; that when we

* Eph. ii. 14. 16. † Iſaiah liii. 5. ‡ Rom. v. 1.

were

were at enmity with God, our peace was made with him by the death of his Son; that he gave himſelf for us, an offering and a ſacrifice to God *: and that this is the chief point of view in which his divine miſſion is conſidered in ſcripture. And no wonder that it ſhould be ſo; for it was this of which mankind ſtood in the greateſt need, and which natural religion was leaſt able to afford. Whatever pretenſions reaſon might make to the knowledge of a future ſtate, or a complete rule of moral conduct, yet, to find out what atonement God would be pleaſed to accept for the ſins of of the whole world, was a diſcovery which exceeded the utmoſt ſtretch of her abilities. That *ſome* expiation was neceſſary, the Heathens plainly ſaw. They ſaw, that if there was a God, he muſt be pleaſed with virtue, and offended with vice. They perceived, that they were *not* virtuous, and therefore could not be in favour with God. They ſeem even to have wanted the firſt and fundamental requiſite to tranquillity, an aſſurance that pardon was on *any* terms to be obtained. Their Jupiter was armed with

* Heb. ix. 26; x. 12.

thunder

thunder and lightning; he had the miniſters of his vengeance always at hand: but they had no emblems by which they were accuſtomed to expreſs his *mercy*. There was indeed a *poſſibility*, perhaps a probability, that the Deity *might* pardon their offences; but there was alſo a poſſibility that he might *not*; and the very *poſſibility* of being expoſed to the reſentment of a Being, without mercy and without controll, was enough to ſink them into deſpair. But whatever hopes they might have of appeaſing the Deity by proper means, they could have but little (as I before obſerved) of finding out thoſe means. The ſacrifice of animals was the atonement on which they principally depended (a plain proof, by the way, that the neceſſity of *ſome* animal ſacrifice was an idea deeply rooted in the hearts of men); but they were not always ſatisfied even with this. Having perfect confidence in nothing, they tried every thing. They ran from one expedient to another, and, like men ready to periſh, catched at every thing that ſeemed to afford the leaſt ſhadow of relief. Hence that incredible number of deities, temples, altars, feſtivals, games, ſacrifices, ſupplications,

ſupplications, proceſſions, and, in ſhort, that infinite variety of ceremonies and ſuperſtitions, which ſerved plainly to *ſhow* their uneaſineſs, but not at all to *remove* it.

Here, then, the Goſpel gave us PEACE, where nothing human could. From this we know that God is merciful, long-ſuffering, and of great goodneſs. We know that he is reconciled to us by the death of his Son; we are acquainted alſo with the means of preſerving that favour which Chriſt procured for us; and there is no longer added to the miſery of guilt, the torment of not knowing how to expiate it*. We are aſſured, "that Jeſus is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the "ſin of the world; that he came to ſeek and "to ſave that which was loſt; and that who-"ſoever believeth in him ſhall not periſh, "but have everlaſting life†." In this reſpect, therefore, that is, in the moſt important of all human concerns, the meaneſt man amongſt us has more true content, and peace, and ſatisfaction of mind, than all the learning

* Te duce, ſi qua manent ſceleris veſtigia noſtri,
Irrita *perpetuâ ſolvent formidine* terras. VIRG. Ecl. iv. 13.

† John i. 29. Matth. xviii. 11. John iii. 15.

and wiſdom of all the philoſophers upon earth, antient, or modern, could ever beſtow. But,

II. It is not only in a ſpiritual ſenſe, that our Redeemer *brought peace upon earth*; it is true of him in a temporal meaning alſo. That benevolence of diſpoſition, and gentleneſs of behaviour, which he ſo conſtantly and ſo warmly recommended, both by his doctrine and his example, were entirely calculated to promote the peace and harmony of mankind, and to knit them together in one common bond of love and affection. If ever PEACE was made viſible in outward form, it was in the perſon of our bleſſed Lord. His whole life and converſation were one uniform repreſentation of it, inſomuch that it might, even in this ſenſe, be affirmed of him, that "of his PEACE there was no end*." It would be no difficult nor unpleaſing taſk to trace the influence of this principle from his earlieſt to his lateſt breath; and to draw together a very uncommon and ſurpriſing aſſemblage of circumſtances, all concurring to eſtabliſh the uniformity of its operation

* Iſaiah ix. 7.

through

through the whole tenour of his life; but it may ſuffice for the preſent, to touch upon a few of the moſt obvious. It has always been remarked, that he came into the world in a time of profound and almoſt univerſal peace; and his birth was (as we have ſeen) firſt announced, by declarations of peace and good-will, to ſhepherds, men, generally ſpeaking, of a moſt quiet and inoffenſive diſpoſition and behaviour. The years of his childhood were paſſed in a meek and dutiful ſubjection to his earthly parents; and after he came into public life, he ſhowed the ſame peaceable ſubmiſſion to all his other lawful ſuperiors. The perſons whom he choſe to be the companions and the witneſſes of his miniſtry, were of the lower ſtation, and the humbleſt tempers. The firſt miracle he worked, was with a deſign to promote good-humour and good-will among men; and all of them tended to improve the peaceful enjoyment of life in ſome material inſtance. Yet, benevolent as the deſign of theſe and all his other actions was, he endeavoured to do them all in ſuch a manner, at ſuch times, and in ſuch places, as to give no offence to any one; to

excite no envy, jealouſy, or unjuſt ſuſpicions. He had at the ſame time to ſtruggle with the prejudices, the miſtakes, and miſconſtructions of his friends, and the inveterate rancour of his enemies; but yet he never ſuffered either the one or the other to diſturb the compoſure of his mind, or the peaceableneſs of his deportment. He bore all the unmerited inſults and injuries of his adverſaries with more patience than his followers could ſee them, and was almoſt the only perſon that was not provoked at the treatment he met with. The ſame love of peace attended him to the laſt. The ſword that was drawn in his defence he ordered to be ſheathed *, and healed the wound it had inflicted †. Although "if he "had prayed to his father, he would have "ſent him twelve legions of angels ‡," yet he ſuffered himſelf to be "led like a lamb to the "ſlaughter; and as a ſheep before her ſhearers "is dumb, ſo opened he not his mouth §."

As he lived, ſo he alſo taught, for he "ſpoke PEACE to his people ‖." The main purport of his diſcourſes was, to baniſh from

* John xviii. 11. † Luke xxii. 51. ‡ Matth. xxvi. 53.
§ Iſaiah liii. 7. ‖ Zech. ix. 10.

the

the minds of men all thoſe malignant and turbulent paſſions which fill the world with diſorder and miſery, and to introduce in their room every thing that tends to turn away wrath, to ſoften reſentment, and to cheriſh peace; a meek and inoffenſive deportment, a patient reſignation under injuries and affronts, a compaſſionate tenderneſs and fellow-feeling for the miſeries of others, and benevolence as extenſive as the whole creation of God. If ever he entered into a houſe, he ſaluted it with peace *. If the penitent and contrite ſinner fell down and begged mercy at his feet, he bid him go in peace and ſin no more †. He was continually exhorting his diſciples to "be at peace one with another, to love "their very enemies, to bleſs thoſe that "curſed them, to do good to thoſe that hated "them, and to pray for thoſe that deſpite-"fully uſed and perſecuted them ‡."

From ſuch a doctrine, ſupported by ſuch an example, one might naturally hope for the moſt pacific effects. And in fact thoſe effects have followed. For, although Chriſ-

* Luke x. 5. † Ib. vii. 50; viii. 48. John viii. 11.
‡ Mark ix. 50. Matth. iv. 44.

tianity has not always been ſo well underſtood, or ſo honeſtly practiſed, as it might have been; although its ſpirit has been often miſtaken, and its precepts miſapplied *, yet, under all theſe diſadvantages, it has gradually produced a viſible and a bleſſed change in thoſe points which moſt materially concern the peace and quiet of the world. Its beneficent ſpirit has ſpread itſelf through all the different relations and modifications of life, and communicated its kindly influence to almoſt every public and private concern of mankind. It has inſenſibly worked itſelf into the inmoſt frame and conſtitution of civil ſtates. It has given a tinge to the complexion of their governments, to the temper and adminiſtration of their laws. It has reſtrained the ſpirit of the prince, and the madneſs of the people. It has ſoftened the rigour of deſpotiſm, and tamed the inſolencc of conqueſt. It has, in ſome degree, taken away the edge of the ſword, and thrown even over the horrors of war a veil of mercy. It has deſcended into families, has diminiſhed the preſſure of private tyranny, improved every

* See the preceding diſcourſe.

domeſtic

domeſtic endearment, given tenderneſs to the parent, humanity to the maſter, reſpect to ſuperiors, to inferiors eaſe; and left, in ſhort, the moſt evident traces of its PEACEFUL GENIUS, in all the various ſubordinations, dependencies, and connexions of ſocial life. Theſe aſſertions would very eaſily admit, and may perhaps hereafter receive, a particular proof. But, for the preſent, I muſt content myſelf with obſerving in general, that mankind are, upon the whole, even in a temporal view, under infinite obligations to the mild and pacific temper of the Goſpel; have reaped from it more ſubſtantial worldly benefits than from any other inſtitution upon earth; and found it, by happy experience, to be a religion entirely worthy the gracious Father of the univerſe, and the Saviour of mankind. As one proof of this, (among many others) conſider only the ſhocking carnage made in the human ſpecies, by the expoſure of infants, the gladiatorial ſhows, and the exceedingly cruel uſage of ſlaves, allowed and practiſed by the antient Pagans. Theſe were not the accidental and temporary exceſſes of a ſudden fury, but were *legal*, and *eſtabliſhed*, and *conſtant* me-

thods of murdering and tormenting mankind, encouraged by the wiſeſt legiſlators, and affording amuſement to the tendereſt and moſt compaſſionate minds *. Had Chriſtianity done nothing more than brought into diſuſe (as it confeſſedly has done) the two

* Beſides the many other well-known ſeverities exerciſed towards the ſlaves of the ancients, there was a law at Sparta, called the Cryptia, which ordered them to be murdered in cold blood, whenever they increaſed ſo faſt as to give umbrage to the ſtate. *Plutarch. in Lycurg.* The ſame author (*De Amore Prolis*) ſpeaks of the expoſure of infants as a very common practice. *Seneca* does the ſame. *De Ira*, l. i. c. 15. It ſtill obtains among the ſavages in America; and it is ſaid that upwards of 3000 children are annually expoſed in the ſtreets of Pekin. Lypſius affirms (*Saturn*, l. i. c. 12.) that the gladiatorial ſhows ſometimes coſt Europe twenty or thirty thouſand lives in a month; and not only the men, but even the women of all ranks, were paſſionately fond of theſe ſhows. The execrable barbarities here mentioned, continued as they were without intermiſſion through a long courſe of years, muſt have deſtroyed many more lives than all the temporary ravages of religious perſecution put together. I cannot conclude this note, without obſerving how ſtrongly theſe ſhocking facts confirm the deſcription given of the antient Heathens by St. Paul, who repreſents them as *full of murder, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.* Rom. i. 29, 31. And indeed the whole picture he there draws of Pagan morality and religion will be found, on examination, to be in every the minuteſt feature of it *exactly and accurately true.* Let the reader peruſe that chapter with attention, and let him thank God, from the bottom of his ſoul, that he is a CHRISTIAN.

former

former of theſe inhuman cuſtoms entirely, and the latter to a very great degree, it had juſtly merited the title of the BENEVOLENT RELIGION. But this is far from being all. Throughout the more enlightened parts of Chriſtendom, there prevails a gentleneſs of manners widely different from the ferocity of the moſt civilized nations of antiquity; and that liberality with which every ſpecies of diſtreſs is relieved, both by private donations and public benefactions, even in ſome of the moſt bigotted countries of Europe, is a virtue as peculiar to the Chriſtian name as it is eminently conducive to ſocial happineſs. As for ourſelves, in the nature of our civil conſtitution, in the extent of our freedom, in the ſecurity of our perſons and properties, in the temper of our laws, in the adminiſtration of juſtice, in domeſtic peace and comfort, in offices of mutual kindneſs and charity, we have a viſible and undeniable ſuperiority over the antients. To what then can this happy change in our circumſtances be owing? To philoſophy (replies the Deiſt *) to mild and gentle philoſophy, to the humane ſuggeſtions

* Voltaire de la Tolerance, ch. iv. p. 30, 34, 44.

of

of reaſon, and the improvement of the liberal arts. Were then reaſon, philoſophy, and good learning, utterly unknown in Greece and Rome? Were not theſe the very fountains of every thing that was ſublime and excellent in human wiſdom and polite literature, from whence they were diſtributed in the pureſt ſtreams over the reſt of the world, and deſcended to all ſucceeding ages? Were they not carried, in thoſe great ſchools, to a degree of elegance and perfection, at which it is at leaſt doubtful whether the moderns have yet arrived, or ever will? And yet in theſe very places, at a time when all the arts and ſciences were in their full ſtrength and maturity, it was then that thoſe various inhumanities, which are by Chriſtians held in the utmoſt abhorrence, were publickly authorized, and an ambitious, contentious, ſanguinary diſpoſition univerſally prevailed. It was then that almoſt every civil government was a kind of military eſtabliſhment, was founded in violence and maintained by it; that wars were begun wantonly, conducted fiercely, and terminated inhumanly; that a paſſion for martial atchievements, a luſt of empire, an inſatiable

ſatiable thirſt of glory and conqueſt, filled the world with bloodſhed and confuſion. It was then that, in the very beſt inſtitutions, the greateſt part of the ſubjects enjoyed no liberty at all; and what the reſt enjoyed, was purchaſed frequently at the expence of their repoſe, their humanity, and a great part of thoſe ſocial comforts which render liberty truly valuable. It was then that the courts of judicature (at Rome more eſpecially) were inconceivably corrupt*; that the power both of the father and of the huſband was carried beyond all bounds of lenity and utility; that divorces were allowed for the moſt trivial cauſes; that the education of children was unreaſonably ſevere and rigorous; that infants were ſacrificed to views of policy; that men were trained up to murder each other, for the entertainment of the ſpectators; and that the happieſt ſtates were continually rent in pieces by the moſt violent diſſenſions, proſcriptions, and aſſaſſinations, which

* Opinio—omnium ſermone percrebuit in his juſticiis quæ nunc ſunt, *pecunioſum hominem* quamvis ſit nocens, *neminem poſſe damnari. Cic. in Verrem.* Orat. 1.

each

each party in its turn retorted on its adverſaries, and always with redoubled fury and inhumanity.

If then the utmoſt perfection of philoſophy and the fine arts was not able to tame the fierceneſs of antient manners, nay, if they actually grew worſe, in this and many other reſpects, in proportion to their advancement in learning and politeneſs, to what elſe but Chriſtianity can it be owing, that ſcarce any conſiderable traces of this univerſal barbarity now remain among us; that in domeſtic ſociety, the eaſe and happineſs of each individual, even the very loweſt, is properly attended to; that weakneſs of ſex, tenderneſs of age, and humility of condition, inſtead of provoking inſult, generally attract pity and protection; that civil liberty is in our own country more firmly rooted, more equally diffuſed, more ſecurely enjoyed; that juſtice is moſt uprightly and impartially adminiſtered; that the meaneſt of the people are as much under the protection of the laws as the moſt rich and powerful; that the rage of univerſal empire is conſiderably abated, and the frequency, duration, and cruelty of wars greatly

greatly diminiſhed; that civil commotions more rarely happen, are attended commonly with fewer circumſtance of inhumanity and horror, and have oftener proved favourable than fatal to liberty; that the very worſt diſſentions in this country have been "leſs diſtinguiſhed by atrocious deeds, either of treachery or cruelty, than were ever any inteſtine diſcords of ſo long continuance *;" and that the two happieſt changes we ever experienced, the *reſtoration* and the *revolution*, were effected with very little interruption of public tranquillity, and were nothing more than *eaſy tranſitions*, not (as they would have been under Pagan or Mahometan governments) *horrible convulſions* †? Compare all theſe amazing

* Hume's Hiſt. 4to, vol. v. p. 337.

† Some perhaps may be inclined to doubt the truth of one of the poſitions advanced above, viz. *that the frequency, duration, and cruelty of wars are leſs now than in antient times.* But when we conſider the immenſe armies ſucceſſively raiſed and loſt by the Aſiatic monarchs; the endleſs contentions for ſovereignty between the rival ſtates of Greece; the prodigious numbers ſlain by Alexander the Great; the ſanguinary conteſts among his ſucceſſors for upwards of 200 years; the continual ſcenes of bloodſhed which Sicily exhibited for many centuries under its various tyrants; the inceſſant wars of the Romans with the Italian ſtates, the Carthaginians, the Macedonians,

ing improvements in ſocial happineſs, ſince the introduction of Chriſtianity, with the precepts and doctrines of that religion; conſider their natural tendency to produce what actually has been produced, and then ſay whether you can heſitate one moment in aſcribing theſe effects to the Goſpel, as their ſole or at leaſt principal cauſe? What puts this matter almoſt beyond a doubt, is, that in thoſe countries where the Chriſtian revelation is yet unknown, the civil bleſſings enjoyed by Chriſtianity are equally unknown.

Macedonians, Greeks, and various Eaſtern nations, the Spaniards, Gauls, Britons, and Germans, beſides the ſhocking carnage of their own civil wars, ſo as to have been only three times in a ſtate of peace, for a ſhort intreval, during almoſt ſeven centuries; when we reflect further, that it was no uncommon thing, in thoſe ages, to ſee armies of 300,000 men in the field, of which ſometimes the whole, frequently the greater part, and always a large part, fell in battle; and when to all this we add the incredible devaſtations made by the ſeveral barbarous hordes, that at different times burſt forth in torrents from the North, and deluged Europe, Aſia, and Africa with blood; we ſhall, perhaps, be inclined to think that Chriſtianity has, upon the whole, already leſſened the horors and deſolations of war in ſome degree, and that, as it comes to be better underſtood, and more generally embraced and practiſed, its pacific influence will be growing every day more viſible and effectual.

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The miſeries of their anceſtors have deſcended to them with their ſuperſtitions, and bear a daily living teſtimony to the benevolence of our religion *. And it is no leſs remarkable, that the degree of perfection in which theſe advantages are enjoyed by any nation, is in general pretty nearly proportioned to the degree of purity in which the doctrines of the Goſpel are there profeſſed and taught. Thus, for example (to produce only one inſtance out of a multitude) in thoſe kingdoms, where there is no Chriſtianity, there is no liberty. Where the ſuperſtitions and corruptions of Popery have almoſt totally deſtroyed the ſimplicity of the Chriſtian revelation, there too is liberty much obſcured and depreſſed. Where ſome of thoſe corruptions are thrown off, there ſome brighter gleams of liberty appear. Where the national religion approaches neareſt to the native pu-

* Let the reader only compare the preſent ſtate of the Eaſtern and Weſtern Indians, of Africa and China, of the Turkiſh and the Perſian empires, and of all the late diſcovered iſlands, both in the northern and the ſouthern hemiſphere, with that of the Chriſtian part of Europe, and he will have little reaſon to doubt the truth of what is here aſſerted.

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rity of the Goſpel, there too civil liberty ſhines forth in its full luſtre, and it is carried to a degree of perfection, beyond which human weakneſs will not, perhaps, ſuffer it to be advanced.

III. Having dwelt ſo long on the firſt part of this diſcourſe, *the beneficial influence of the Goſpel on the peace and happineſs of mankind*, there is the leſs time, and indeed the leſs neceſſity, to enlarge on the other, that is, *on the evidence which ariſes from hence of the divine goodneſs and mercy towards us.* For, ſince it has been ſhewn that Chriſt did in almoſt every ſenſe of the word, *bring peace upon earth**; that he has made our peace with God, by taking upon him the ſins of the whole world; that he has, in conſequence of this, reſtored to us our peace of mind; that he has introduced peace and gentleneſs into the ſentiments and the manners of men towards each other; and that, notwithſtanding all the difficulties and diſadvantages under which the Goſpel has laboured, the many violent paſſions it has had to ſtruggle with, and the variety of obſtacles which have impeded

* See Vitringa on Iſaiah ii. 4.

its

its operations, and counteracted its natural effects, it has nevertheleſe gradually and ſilently, yet effectually, advanced the peace and comfort of ſociety; what need can there be of any further proof that the miſſion of Chriſt was a moſt ſtriking inſtance of God's goodwill to mankind?

Inſtead therefore of going about to prove what we all feel to be true, let me rather endeavour to inſpire you with what I fear is not always felt as it ought to be, a proper warmth of gratitude and love for ſuch unſpeakable goodneſs. If you aſk what return God expects for ſending his Son into the world, let the Apoſtle anſwer you; "If God ſo "loved us, we ought alſo to love one ano-"ther*." An extenſive, an active benevolence is the tribute he demands from you; and when he makes *you* happy, the condition is no harder than this, that *you* ſhould make *others* ſo. Let then your thankfulneſs be expreſſed in that beſt and moſt forcible of all languages, better, as St. Paul ſays, than the tongue of men and angels, CHARITY. Let it prompt you to every act of kindneſs and

* John iv. 11.

humanity towards your neighbour. In this there can be no diſſimulation or diſguiſe. Sacrifices may be offered by impure hands, and praiſes by diſſembling or unmeaning lips. But he who relieves the indigent, inſtructs the ignorant, comforts the afflicted, protects the oppreſſed, conceals the faults he ſees, and forgives the injuries he feels, affords a moſt convincing proof of his ſincerity, an inconteſtible evidence of his gratitude to his heavenly benefactor. And be not afraid, I beſeech you, of doing too much, of *over-paying* God's favours. After you have ranged through the whole field of duties which charity lays open to you, the bleſſings you beſtow will fall infinitely ſhort of thoſe you have received. Put then your abilities upon the ſtretch, to do all the good you can unto all men. But in a more eſpecial manner, ſince it was one of the chief ends of Chriſt's miſſion *to bring peace upon earth*, let it be your great ambition to co-operate with him, as far as you are able, in this great deſign; let it be your conſtant ſtudy and delight to tread in the ſteps of your bleſſed Maſter, and to contribute every thing in your power towards compleating

compleating that great and god-like work of *giving peace to man.* "Let all bitterneſs, "and wrath, and clamour, and evil-ſpeaking, "be put away from among you, with all "malice; and be ye kind one to another, "tender-hearted, forgiving one another, "even as God, for Chriſt's ſake, hath for-"given you *."

* Eph. iv. 31, 32.

SERMON XIV.

2 TIM. iii. 4.

LOVERS OF PLEASURES MORE THAN LOVERS OF GOD.

TO what period of time, and to what particular perſons, the ſacred writer here alludes, it is neither eaſy nor material to determine. But there *is* a queſtion which it is very material, and I doubt but too eaſy, for moſt of us to anſwer; whether the deſcription in the text may not be juſtly applied to ourſelves? In whatever ſenſe we take the word PLEASURES, whether as denoting thoſe which are in themſelves criminal, or thoſe which only become ſo by exceſs and abuſe; it is ſurely doing us no injury to ſay, that we "love them more than God." At

preſent I ſhall confine myſelf to that ſort of pleaſures, which are uſually ſtiled innocent; and in a certain degree, and under proper reſtrictions, undoubtedly are ſo; I mean the gayeties and amuſements of life. If we are not lovers of *theſe* pleaſures more than lovers of God, if our piety is greater than our diſſipation, it muſt be great indeed. If we ſerved our Maker with half that zeal, half that alacrity and perſeverance, with which we purſue our amuſements, we ſhould be the moſt pious nation this day upon earth. But how far this is from being the caſe, at leaſt with reſpect to a large proportion of almoſt every rank of men amonſt us, is but too apparent. It is not the LIVING GOD, it is PLEASURE that they worſhip. To this they are idolaters; to this they ſacrifice their time, their talents, their fortunes, their health, and too often their innocence and peace of mind. In their haſte to enjoy this life, they forget that there is another; they live (as the Apoſtle expreſſes it) "without God in the world *," and their endleſs engagements not only exclude all love, but all thought, of him. How-

* Eph. ii. 12.

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ever carefully right principles of religion may have been originally planted in their breaſts, they have no room to grow up. They are choaked with pleaſures of this world, and bring no fruit to perfection. Invention ſeems to have been tortured to find out new ways of conſuming time, and of being uſeleſsly employed. And there has appeared ſo wonderful an ingenuity in this reſpect, that it ſeems almoſt impoſſible for the wit of man to invent, or the life of man to admit, any further additions to this kind of luxury. There are thouſands, even of thoſe who would take it very ill to be called vicious, who yet from the time of their riſing in the morning to the time of their going to reſt at night, never once beſtow a ſingle thought upon eternity; nor, while they riot in the bleſſings of Providence, vouchſafe to caſt one devout look up to the gracious author of them, in whom "they live and move and "have their being *."

Many, I know, would perſuade themſelves and others, that there can be no harm where there is no actual vice; and that, provided

* Acts xvii. 28.

they ſtep not over the bounds of virtue, they cannot be guilty of an exceſs in pleaſure.

But is it true, in the firſt place, that the man of gayety never *does* ſtep over the bounds of virtue? Are all thoſe things which go under the name of amuſements as perfectly innocent as they are generally repreſented to be? Is there not *one* diverſion at leaſt (as it is called) and one ſo predominant in the higher ranks of life, that it has ſwallowed up almoſt every other, which is big with the moſt fatal miſchief? A diverſion, which, far different from the common run of amuſements, has no foundation in our natural appetites; no charms to captivate the fancy, or the underſtanding; nothing to make glad the heart of man, to give him a chearful countenance, and refreſh him after the cares and fatigues of duty; but runs counter to reaſon, ſenſe, and nature; defeats all the purpoſes of amuſement; ſinks the ſpirits inſtead of raiſing them; ſours the temper inſtead of improving it: and, when it is carried to its utmoſt lengths, takes ſuch entire and abſolute poſſeſſion of the ſoul, as to ſhut out every other concern both for God and man; extinguiſhes every

every generous ſentiment; excites the moſt malignant paſſions; provokes to the moſt profane expreſſions; brings diſtreſs, ſometimes ruin, upon its wretched votaries, their families, friends, and dependents; tempts them to uſe unfair, or mean, or oppreſſive methods of retrieving their affairs; and ſometimes to conclude the diſmal ſcene by the laſt fatal act of deſperation. I do not ſay that gaming *always* produces theſe effects; or that it is to all perſons, in all circumſtances, and in all its various degrees, equally pernicious and unlawful. But it has always *a natural tendency* to theſe effects, it always expoſes ourſelves and others to great danger, and can never be ranked among our innocent amuſements. Yet as ſuch it is every day more and more purſued; nay has even apporpriated to itſelf the name of *play*; for what reaſon I know not, unleſs to *play* with our lives and fortunes, with happineſs temporal and eternal, be the moſt delectable of all human enjoyments.

But putting this ſtrange unaccountable paſſion out of the queſtion; do not even our moſt allowable diverſions ſometimes end in

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ſin, though they may not begin with it? Does not an immoderate fondneſs for theſe trivial things, inſenſibly weaken and corrupt our hearts, and lead us by imperceptible ſteps to a temper of mind, and a courſe of action, eſſentially wrong? The fact is, a ſtate of *neutrality* in religion, an inſipid mediocrity between vice and virtue, though it is what many would be glad to take up with, is an imaginary ſtate; at leaſt, is very ſeldom, if ever, to be found in a life of gayety and diſſipation. The man who is conſtantly engaged in the amuſements, can ſcarce ever eſcape the pollutions, of the world. In his eager purſuits of pleaſure, he will be ſometimes apt to overſhoot the mark, and to go further than he ought, perhaps than he intended. Even they who are moſt in earneſt about their future welfare; who have taken care to fortify their minds with the firmeſt principles of religion; who conſtantly endeavour to keep alive their hopes and fears of futurity; to guard with the utmoſt vigilance every avenue of the mind, and ſecure all "the iſſues of life *;" even theſe, I ſay, are

* Proverbs iv. 23.

ſometimes

ſometimes unable, with all their caution and circumſpection, to prevent ſurprize; with all their ſtrength and reſolution, to withſtand the violence of headſtrong paſſions and deſires; which often burſt through all reſtraints, and beat down all the barriers that reaſon and religion had been a long time raiſing up againſt them. What then muſt be the caſe when all the impreſſions of religion are, by the continual attrition of diverſions, worn out and effaced; when the mind is ſtript of all prudential caution; no guard left upon the imagination; no check upon the paſſions; the natural ſpring and vigour of the ſoul impaired, and no ſupernatural aid to ſtrengthen and ſupport it? What elſe can be expected, but that we ſhould fall an eaſy prey to the weakeſt invader, and yield ourſelves up to the ſlighteſt temptation? "When the "unclean ſpirit cometh, he finds every thing "within prepared for his reception, empty, "ſwept, and garniſhed; and he taketh with "him ſeven other ſpirits more wicked than "himſelf; and they enter in, and dwell "there, and the laſt ſtate of that man is

"worſe

"worſe than the firſt *;" he begins in gayety, and ends in vice.

Let us, however, take this queſtion up on the moſt favourable grounds: Let us allow it poſſible for you to run round for ever in the circle of gayety, without ever once ſtriking into the paths of vice. Is this, do you think, ſufficient for ſalvation? If your amuſements as effectually choke the good ſeed as the rankeſt weeds of vice, can you with any propriety call them innocent? Do you imagine that God, who is a "jealous God †," will bear to be ſupplanted in your affections by every trifle; or that he will be content with your not taking up arms againſt him, though you do him not one ſingle piece of acceptable ſervice? The utmoſt you can plead is a kind of negative merit, the merit of doing neither good nor harm; and what reception that is likely to meet with, you may judge from the anſwer given to the unprofitable ſervant, who produced his talent wrapt up in a napkin, undiminiſhed indeed, but unimproved: "O "thou wicked ſervant, wherefore gaveſt thou

* Matth. xii. 44, 45. † Exod. xx. 5.

"not

"not my money into the bank, that at my "coming I might have required mine own "with uſury * ?" It is not enough merely to abſtain from groſs crimes. It is not enough to enjoy yourſelves in an indolent harmleſs tranquility; to divide matters ſo nicely as to avoid equally the inconveniences of vice, and the fatigues of virtue; to praiſe religion in words, to love it perhaps in ſpeculation, but to leave the trouble of practiſing it to others. This languor and inactivity is a kind of lethargy in the ſoul, which renders it utterly inſenſible to the life and ſpirit of religion. Indifference in any good cauſe is blameable. In religion, in the Chriſtian religion, it is inſupportable. It does violence to the firſt and fundamental principle of that religion: "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy "God, with all thy heart, with all thy "ſoul, with all thy mind, and with all thy "ſtrength †." Go now and let your whole heart, and ſoul, and mind, and ſtrength, be engaged in purſuing your amuſements, and promoting your pleaſures, and then lay claim to the rewards of Chriſtianity.

* Luke xix. 23. † Mark xii. 30.

Happy

Happy will it be for you, if you can eſcape its puniſhments. The Goſpel, I am ſure, gives you no grounds to ſuppoſe that you ſhall. Though you bear no "evil fruit," yet if you bear no "good," you are involved in the ſentence of the fig-tree, "Cut it down, "why cumbereth it the ground *." To do nothing is in many caſes to do a poſitive wrong, and as ſuch requires a poſitive puniſhment. To ſtand neuter in dangerous commotions of the ſtate, the great Athenian lawgiver declared to be a crime *againſt* the ſtate; and in like manner the great Chriſtian lawgiver declares; "he that is not with me, is "againſt me, and he that gathereth not with "me, ſcattereth abroad †."

Chriſtianity is throughout an *active* religion; it conſiſts not only in "abſtaining "from all appearance of evil ‡;" but "in "being ready to every good work ‖;" and if we ſtop ſhort at the firſt, we leave the better half of our buſineſs undone. Chriſt himſelf "went about" continually "doing good §;" and he has preſcribed a variety of poſitive and

* Luke xiii. 7. † Matth. xii. 30. ‡ 1 Theſſ. v. 22. Tit. iii. 1. § Acts x. 38.

practical

practical duties to his disciples, as the condition of their salvation; and pressed the performance of these duties upon them, with an earnestness and a force of expression, that may well alarm the thoughtless and the gay, and make them reflect on the extreme danger of their situation. With regard to God, we are commanded "to believe in him, to fear "him, to love him, to worship him, to give "him thanks always, to pray without ceas-"ing, and watch thereunto with all perse-"verance." With regard to our neighbour, we are "to do good unto all men, to be rich "in good works, to be kind and tender-"hearted, to feed the hungry, to cloath the "naked, to remember them that are in bonds, "to minister to the sick, to visit the father-"less and widows in their affliction." With regard to ourselves, we are enjoined "to be "temperate in all things, to keep under our "bodies, and bring them into subjection, to "set our affections on things above, to watch "and pray lest we enter into temptation, to "work out our salvation with fear and trem-"bling, to use all diligence to make our call-

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" ing and election ſure." Such and ſo various are the duties preſſed upon us in every page of the ſcriptures. And is this now a religion to be trifled with? Is it not enough to employ every moment we can ſpare from the indiſpenſible duties of our ſtation, and the neceſſary refreſhments of nature; and how then can it be conſiſtent with that inceſſant hurry and diſſipation, which, intent only on providing a ſucceſſion of worthleſs amuſements and ignoble gratifications, overlooks every obligation of a man and a Chriſtian; and ſuppoſes that the whole buſineſs of life is not to employ time uſefully, but to conſume it inſignificantly? Can theſe men ſeriouſly imagine that they are all this time " work-" ing out their ſalvation," that they are " preſſing forwards towards the mark for the " prize of their high calling *," that they are every day drawing nearer and nearer to immortal happineſs, and that they ſhall ſhare the crown of glory with them who " have " borne the burthen and heat of the day †?" Is eternal life ſo very ſmall an object, ſo ex-

* Phil. iii. 14. † Matth. xx. 12.

tremely

tremely cheap a purchaſe, as to require not the leaſt pains to obtain it? Or is the ſituation of the rich man repreſented in ſcripture to be ſo perfectly ſafe and ſecure, that, while the reſt of mankind are enduring afflictions, ſtruggling with difficulties, ſubduing their paſſions, and "working out their ſalvation "with fear and trembling;" he, and he only, may neglect all theſe precautions, may give up his whole time and thoughts to dreſs, and magnificence, and diverſion, and good cheer; may center his whole care in his own dear perſon, and make it is ſole ſtudy to gratify every wiſh of his heart; may leave his ſalvation to take care of itſelf, and, as if he had obtained a promiſe of Heaven in reverſion, think of nothing but preſent felicity; and ſay within himſelf, "Soul, thou haſt much "goods laid up for many years, take thine "eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry *?" Be not deceived: This is not virtue; this is not religion; this is not Chriſtianity. It is, on the contrary that very temper of mind, that indolent, ſoft, luxurious, dream of the ſoul, for which the rich man in the Goſpel was

* Luke xii. 19.

condemned "to lift up his eyes in tor-"ments*;" and let thoſe who dread his puniſhment be warned by his example.

It is then a fatal miſtake to ſuppoſe, that a life of continual gayety and diſſipation, becauſe it is not marked with any notorious crimes, becauſe it does not ſhock our conſciences with palpable guilt, is therefore perfectly innocent. You have by this time ſeen, I hope, that it is far from being ſo. You have ſeen that it naturally leads to, and frequently terminates in, actual vice; that at the leaſt it ſo totally unmans and enfeebles the ſoul as to render it unfit for the reception of religious truths, incapable of exerting its nobler powers, unable to ſtruggle through the common difficulties, or ſupport the common afflictions, of life; and leaves neither time, nor inclination, nor ability, to perform the moſt important duties of a man, a ſocial being, and a Chriſtian.

The truth is; although diverſions may ſerve very well to quicken a palled appetite, they are much too poignant and high-ſeaſoned to be the conſtant food and nouriſhment

* Luke xvi. 23.

of

of the ſoul. They not only deſtroy our reliſh for the more plain and ſimple fare of ſobriety and virtue, but lay a foundation for the worſt diſeaſes; and though they do not ſo inſtantly kill as the deadly poiſon of vice, yet, with a gradual and fatal certainty, they undermine the vital parts, and ſap the conſtitution.

Beware then of an error, which is the more dangerous, becauſe it is not always perceived, or at leaſt acknowledged, to *be* an error. And ſuch of you, more eſpecially, as are juſt ſetting out in life, full of thoſe high ſpirits and gay imaginations which youth, and rank, and affluence, naturally inſpire; beware of giving way to that feveriſh thirſt of pleaſure, to that frivolous turn of mind and levity of conduct, which will render all your great advantages uſeleſs, and totally defeat every grand purpoſe of your creation. Do not imagine that you were born to pleaſe yourſelves only. Do not entertain that falſe, that deſtructive notion, that your wealth and time are all your own; that you may diſpoſe of them exactly as you think fit; may laviſh the whole of them on your own pleaſures and amuſements, without

being accountable to any one for the application of them. There *is* One, moſt aſſuredly, who may, and who has declared that he will, call you to an account, for the uſe of that leiſure, and thoſe riches, which he beſtowed upon you for far other purpoſes than that mean ignoble one of mere ſelfiſh gratification. There are duties of the laſt importance owing to your families, your friends, your country, your fellow-creatures, your Creator, which you are bound under the moſt ſacred ties to perform; and whatever calls off your attention from theſe, does from that moment ceaſe to be innocent. Here then is the preciſe point at which you ought to ſtop. You may be LOVERS OF PLEASURE; it is natural, it is reaſonable, for you to be ſo; but you muſt not be LOVERS OF PLEASURE, MORE THAN LOVERS OF GOD. This is the true line that ſeparates *harmleſs gayety* from *criminal diſſipation*. It is a line drawn by the hand of God himſelf, and he will never ſuffer it to be paſſed with impunity. HE claims, on the juſteſt grounds, the firſt place in your hearts. His laws and precepts are to be the firſt object of your regard. And be aſſured, that by ſuffering

ing them to be ſo, you will be no loſers even in preſent felicity. It is a truth demonſtrable by reaſon, and confirmed by invariable experience, that a perpetual round of faſhionable gayety, is not the road to real ſubſtantial happineſs. Aſk thoſe who have tried it, and they will all (if they are honeſt) with one voice declare, that it is not. It is indeed in the very nature of things impoſſible that it ſhould be ſo. This world is not calculated to afford, the human mind is not formed to bear, a conſtant ſucceſſion of new and exquiſite delights. To aim therefore at uninterrupted, unbounded gayety, to make pleaſure ſo neceſſary to your exiſtence, that you cannot ſubſiſt one moment without it, is to convert every thing that is not abſolute pleaſure into abſolute pain, and to lay the foundation of certain miſery. Diverſions are of too thin and unſubſtantial a nature to fill the whole capacity of a rational mind, or to ſatisfy the cravings of a ſoul formed for immortality. They muſt, they do, tire and diſguſt; you ſee it every day; you ſee men flying from one amuſement to another; affecting to be happy, yet feeling themſelves miſerable; fa-

tigued with purſuing their pleaſures, yet uneaſy without them; growing ſick at laſt of them all, of themſelves, and every thing around them; and compelled perhaps at laſt to have recourſe to ſolitude, without the leaſt proviſion made for it; without any fund of entertainment within, to render it ſupportable. From this wretched ſtate it is that religion would preſerve you; and the very worſt you have to fear from it, is nothing more than ſuch gentle reſtraints on your gayety, as tend to promote the very end you have in view, the true enjoyment even of the preſent life. Suffer it then to do you this kind office; and do not look on Chriſtianity in that gloomy light, in which it ſometimes perhaps appears to you. Far from being an enemy to chearfulneſs, it is the trueſt friend to it. That ſober and temperate uſe of diverſions, which it allows and recommends, is the ſureſt way to preſerve their power to pleaſe, and your capacity to enjoy them. At the ſame time, though it forbids exceſs in our pleaſures, yet it multiplies the number of them; and diſpoſes the mind to receive entertainment from a variety of objects and purſuits,

which

which to the gay part of mankind are abſolutely flat and inſipid. To a body in perfect health the plaineſt food is reliſhing, and to a ſoul rightly harmonized by religion every thing affords delight. Rural retirement, domeſtic tranquillity, friendly converſation, literary purſuits, philoſophical enquiries, works of genius and imagination; nay even the ſilent beauties of unadorned nature, a bright day, a ſtill evening, a ſtarry hemiſphere, are ſources of unadulterated pleaſure to thoſe whoſe taſte is not vitiated by criminal indulgences, or debaſed by trifling ones. And when from theſe you riſe to the ſtill more rational and manly delights of virtue; to that ſelf-congratulation which ſprings up in the ſoul from the conſciouſneſs of having uſed your beſt endeavours to act up to the precepts of the Goſpel; of having done your utmoſt, with the help of Divine Grace, to correct your infirmities, to ſubdue your paſſions, to improve your underſtandings, to exalt and purify your affections, to promote the welfare of all within your reach, to love and obey your Maker and your Redeemer; then is human happineſs wound up to its utmoſt

pitch; and this world has no higher gratifications to give.

Try then, you, who are in ſearch of pleaſures, try theſe among the reſt; try, above all others, the pleaſures of devotion. Think not that they are nothing more than the viſions of a heated imagination. They are real, they are exquiſite. They are what thouſands have experienced, what thouſands ſtill experience, what you yourſelves may experience if you pleaſe. Acquire only a *taſte* for devotion, (as you often do for other things of far leſs value) in the beginning of life, and it will be your ſupport and comfort through the whole extent of it. It will raiſe you above all low cares, and little gratifications; it will give dignity and ſublimity to your ſentiments, inſpire you with fortitude in danger, with patience in adverſity, with moderation in proſperity, with alacrity in all your undertakings, with watchfulneſs over your own conduct, with benevolence to all mankind. It will be ſo far from throwing a damp on your other pleaſures, that it will give new life and ſpirit to them, and make all nature look gay around you. It will be a freſh

freſh fund of chearfulneſs in ſtore for you, when the vivacity, of youth bigins to droop; and is the only thing that *can* fill up that void in the ſoul, which is left in it by every earthly enjoyment. It will not, like worldly pleaſures, deſert you, when you have moſt need of conſolation, in the hours of ſolitude, of ſickneſs, of old age; but when once its holy flame is thoroughly lighted up in your breaſts, inſtead of becoming more faint and languid as you advance in years, it will grow brighter and ſtronger every day; will glow with peculiar warmth and luſtre, when your diſſolution draws near; will diſperſe the gloom and horrors of a death-bed; will give you a foretaſte, and render you worthy to partake, of that FULNESS OF JOY, thoſe pure celeſtial PLEASURES which are at "God's "right hand for evermore *."

* Pſal. xvi. 11.

SERMON XV.

JAMES ii. 10.

WHOSOEVER SHALL KEEP THE WHOLE LAW, AND YET OFFEND IN ONE POINT, HE IS GUILTY OF ALL.

THERE are few paſſages of ſcripture which have given more occaſion of triumph to the enemies of Chriſtianity, and more diſquiet to ſome of its friends, than that now before us. The former repreſent it as a declaration in the higheſt degree tryannical, abſurd, and unjuſt: the latter read it with concern and terror, and are apt to cry out, "it is a hard ſaying, who can bear it*?" And a hard ſaying it undoubtedly is, if it is to be underſtood, as ſome have contended, in

* John vi. 60.

all

all its rigour. But it is not eaſy to conceive why we are to be bound down to the literal meaning in this particular paſſage of ſcripture, when in ſeveral others of the ſame nature, and to the full as ſtrongly expreſſed, we depart from it without ſcruple. No man, I ſuppoſe, thinks himſelf obliged to "give "(without diſtinction or exception) to every "one that aſks him; to pluck out his right "eye, or cut off his right arm; to offer "his coat to him that has taken away his "cloak; or, when his enemy ſmites him on "the right cheek, to turn to him the other "alſo *." Yet all theſe things, if we regard the mere words only, are commanded in the Goſpel. We all hope and believe, that it is poſſible for a rich man to be ſaved, and for a great ſinner to repent and amend his life. But look into the ſcriptures, and they tell you, "that it is eaſier for a camel to go "through the eye of a needle, than for a rich "man to enter into the kingdom of God;" and that, if "a leopard can change his ſpots, "and an Ethiopian his ſkin, then may they "alſo do good that are accuſtomed to do

* Luke vi. 30. Matth. 29, 30, 39, 40.

"evil."

" evil *." Theſe expreſſions, literally taken, imply *an abſolute impoſſibility*. Yet no interpreter, I believe, ever pretended to infer from them any thing more than *extreme difficulty*. By what rule of criticiſm then are we obliged to underſtand the text more ſtrictly than the paſſages juſt mentioned? It certainly ſtands as much in need of a liberal interpretation, and is as juſtly entitled to it, as theſe or any other places of holy writ. Conſider it only with a little attention. " Whoſoever ſhall " keep the whole law, and yet offend in one " point, he is guilty of all." The meaning cannot poſſibly be, that he who offends in *one* point only, does by that means actually offend in *all* points; for this is a palpable contradiction. Nor can it mean, that he who offends in one point only, is in the eye of God *equally guilty*, and of courſe will in a future ſtate be *equally puniſhed*, with him who offends in all points: for this is evidently falſe and unjuſt; contrary to every principle of reaſon and equity, to all our ideas of God's moral attributes, and to the whole tenour of the Goſpel, which uniformly teaches a directly

* Matth. xix. 24. Jer. xiii. 23

oppoſite

oppoſite doctrine. It is therefore not only allowable, it is abſolutely neceſſary, to underſtand the propoſition in the text with ſome qualification. The only queſtion is, what this qualification ſhall be. Different expoſitors have propoſed different reſtrictions; and they who are content with theſe (as many probably are) have nothing further to ſeek. But as there are ſome, I know, who ſtill wiſh for further light on this ſubject, I ſhall beg leave to offer, what, upon the moſt attentive conſidertion of this confeſſedly difficult paſſage, appears to me the trueſt and moſt ſcriptural ſenſe of it. The queſtion is certainly an important one, and well worthy our moſt ſerious attention. It is not a matter of nice, and curious, and unprofitable ſpeculation. It is a point in which we are all moſt deeply intereſted, and the deciſion of it muſt be of great moment to every moral agent, who thinks himſelf bound by the precepts, or looks forwards to the rewards, of the Goſpel *.

It

* The various ſenſes, which have been given to the words of the text by different interpreters, are ſtated and explained by

It may, in the firſt place, be neceſſary to premiſe, that by *offending in one point* is not meant a ſingle caſual tranſgreſſion of duty, ſuch as the beſt of men may ſometimes fall into, but a wilful and conſtant violation of ſome divine command, a ſettled and determined *habit* of ſin. In this there is no difference of opinion, And, ſince it is alſo an agreed point that the full and unlimited ſenſe of the text is indefenſible, all that can be

by Archbiſhop Secker, with his uſual accuracy, judgment, and perſpicuity *. The moſt common interpretation of them, which is well known, has been proved by Biſhop Sherlock to be altogether inadmiſſible; and in the room of it, that very able prelate has propoſed another explanation †, which may be found alſo in St. Auſtin; who has expreſſed the ſubſtance of it very conciſely in theſe words:—Plenitudo legis eſt charitas; ac per hoc qui totam legem ſervaverit, ſi in uno offenderit, fit omnium reus, *quia contra charitatem facit unde tota lex pendet* ‡. It is very conceivable that the biſhop, without ever having met with this paſſage, may have fallen incidentally into the ſame train of thinking. But, notwithſtanding the united authority of theſe two learned men, there are, in my apprehenſion, inſuperable objections to their opinion; with which, however, I do not think it neceſſary at preſent to trouble the reader.

* Vol. vii. Serm. 3.

† Vol. i. Diſc. 18. p. 347.

‡ Auguſt. op. tom. ii. Epiſt. 29. ad Hieronymum.

neceſſary

neceſſary to be proved is this: that he who lives in the habitual commiſſion of any one acknowledged ſin, will, *in ſome material reſpects*, experience the ſame conſequences, and be treated in the ſame manner, as if he had been guilty of all. If this be clearly made out, and ſhown to be conſiſtent with the dictates of juſtice, and the doctrines of the Goſpel, it will fully juſtify St. James's declaration; and will at the ſame time be as near an aproach to the literal meaning as *can* be made, without falling directly into it.

The next enquiry then of courſe is, *in what reſpects* he who offends in one point will be treated as if he had been guilty of all.

Now there are two effects, and thoſe of a very important nature indeed, which will equally follow from partial and from total diſobedience. The firſt of theſe is *excluſion from heaven, or the loſs of eternal life.*

In this reſpect our guilt, our demerit, our incapacity for future happineſs, will be preciſely the ſame, whether we offend in one point, or whether we offend in all. The gates of heaven are ſhut againſt unexpiated ſin,

ſin, under every form and in every degree. He who lives and dies in the violation of any *one* divine command, ſhall have no more title to *reward* than if he had violated *every* command. And in this ſenſe, by offending in one point, he may with great propriety and truth be ſaid to be *guilty of all*. For the conſequence to him, with regard to future happineſs, will be the ſame as if he actually had been ſo. He will be as certainly and as effectually excluded from the kingdom of God, as if he had broken every law, inſtead of one.

Had this then been the *whole* of St. James's meaning in this place, it would have ſufficiently authorized the ſtrong expreſſion he has made uſe of. But there is, I conceive, ſtill another effect, which will equally attend diſobedience in one point and diſobedience in all, and that is, *condemnation to puniſhment*. He who habitually and wilfully tranſgreſſes any one of the divine laws, will be as certainly doomed to *ſome degree* of future miſery as if he had tranſgreſſed them all. This indeed ſeems to be the natural conſequence of his being excluded from reward. In the great day of final retribution, there are

but two claſſes into which all mankind will be divided; the wicked and the good; thoſe who are puniſhed, and thoſe who are rewarded. Between theſe there appears to be no middle rank, no neutral ſet of beings who are neither puniſhed nor rewarded. Not the leaſt traces or moſt diſtant intimations of any ſuch intermediate condition are to be met with in ſcripture. In our Lord's repreſentation of the laſt judgment, the ſheep are placed on the right hand, and the goats on the left, but we hear of none who have a ſtation aſſigned them between both *. They who do not "go away into life eternal," are ordered to depart into a ſtate of everlaſting puniſhment. And, ſince the offender in one point, cannot be among the firſt, he muſt neceſſarily be aſſorted with the laſt. In this then, as well as in the loſs of heaven, he ſhares the fate of him who is guilty of all; with him he is caſt into outer darkneſs, with him he ſuffers the infliction of actual pain. And, ſince his condemnation to theſe ſufferings is as certain and inevitable as if he had broken every command inſtead of one, he may in this re-

* Matth. xxv. 31—46.

ſpect

ſpect alſo, without any impropriety, be ſaid to be *guilty of all.*

Thus far, then, the partial and the univerſal ſinner agree. They are both excluded from happineſs: they are both ſentenced to future puniſhment. But here the reſemblance between them ceaſes, and the parallel muſt be puſhed no further. Here begins the parting point, the line of ſeparation, between the two caſes. Here that limitation of the text takes place, which common juſtice and common ſenſe require. Though the offender in one point, and the offender in all, are both doomed to puniſhment, yet it is by no means to *equal* puniſhment. It may be, and probably is, the ſame in *kind*, but it cannot poſſibly be the ſame in *degree*. We have every aſſurance which reaſon and ſcripture can give, that the future ſufferings of ſinners will be exactly ſuited to their reſpective crimes. The Judge of all the earth will aſſuredly do right, and all the world ſhall ſee and acknowledge the perfect impartiality of his proceedings. Proportionable rewards and puniſhments are every where announced in the Goſpel in the cleareſt and moſt explicit terms. We are told, that

"ſome ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes, "and ſome with few*," and that "it ſhall "be more tolerable for certain perſons in "the day of judgement than for others †," who ſhall receive "a greater condemnation." Whoever therefore thinks himſelf authorized by the text to go on from ſin to ſin, and to accumulate one crime upon another, from a preſumption that he ſhall not ſuffer more for offending in all points than for offending only in one; and that, after the firſt deviation from virtue, every ſubſequent vice may be practiſed with impunity, will find himſelf moſt fatally deceived. As ſure as God is juſt, and the Goſpel is true, ſo ſurely will the judgements of the laſt day be inflicted on all impenitent offenders, not promiscuouſly and indiſcriminately, but in weight and meaſure preciſely balancing their ſeveral demerits. And although from the text we may collect, that any one vice, habitually indulged, will as effectually exclude us from reward, and ſubject us to puniſhment, as if we had been guilty of *every* vice; yet the *degrees* of that puniſhment will be exactly proportioned to

* Luke xii. 47, 48. † Matth. x. 15.

the

the number and the magnitude of the ſins we have committed.

That the ſenſe here given to St. James's words is the true one, muſt, I think, be allowed by every one that will take the trouble of caſting his eye on the chapter from whence the text is taken, and that which immediately precedes it. He will ſee that the apoſtle's reaſoning, throughout a great part of theſe chapters, is directed againſt that moſt dangerous notion, which the heart of man has been at all times but too apt to entertain, and which the Jews, more eſpecially, carried to a moſt extravagant height, *that univerſal holineſs of life is not neceſſary to ſalvation*; that a *partial* obedience to the divine law is ſufficient to ſecure both impunity and reward; and, *that many virtues will cover and excuſe one favourite vice.* This was the error which the apoſtle undertook to combat; and in order to do this, it was not neceſſary for him to prove, that he who offends in one point is, literally and ſtrictly ſpeaking, guilty of all. This was going not only beyond all bounds of credibility and truth, but beyond every thing that his argument required. All that

this naturally led him to prove was, *that no impenitent offender, even though he offended in one point only, ſhould either obtain reward or eſcape puniſhment.* Accordingly, it is this doctrine which he endeavours throughout the whole context to eſtabliſh. It is this which he lays down with peculiar emphaſis in the text; it is this which he inculcates a few verſes before, in words which ſo clearly explain his meaning in the text, that they ſeem to have been almoſt intended as a comment upon it. The words I mean are theſe: "If "any man among you," ſays he, "ſeem to be "religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but "deceiveth his own heart, *that man's reli-* "*gion is vain**." Here, you ſee, is a ſpecification of one particular point (that of *evil-ſpeaking*) in which he ſuppoſes that a man, in other reſpects religious and unblameable, offends. And what does he ſay of that man? Why, that *his religion is vain*, is unprofitable, is uſeleſs to him, will in the laſt day avail him nothing, will neither entitle him to reward, nor exempt him from puniſhment. When therefore, within a few verſes after

* James i. 26.

this,

this, he reſumes the argument, and ſays, "Whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and "yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," who can have any doubt that he means nothing more than to expreſs, in ſtronger and more comprehenſive terms, the very ſame doctrine which he had juſt before laid down with regard to one particular caſe? The clearneſs of the former paſſage reflects light on the obſcurity of the latter; and when St. James ſays, "Whoſoever ſhall keep the "whole law, and yet offend in one point, "*he is guilty of all*," it is exactly the ſame as if he had ſaid, "Whoſoever ſhall keep the "whole law, and yet offend in one point, "*that man's religion is vain*;" will be of no benefit to him in the great day of retribution. He will be as far from obtaining either impunity or reward, as if he had been guilty of every ſin, inſtead of one*.

The

* There is a very ingenious conjecture of Banlacre's, in Wetſtein, on the text in queſtion, James ii. 10. Inſtead of the common reading, γεγονε παντων ενοχος, he propoſes (with a very ſmall variation) γεγονε παντως ενοχος: that is, he is *undoubtedly* guilty, he is *clearly* a tranſgreſſor of the law. Juſt as it is ſaid, Acts xxviii. 4. Παντως φονευς εστιν ο ανθρωπος ουτος, "*No doubt* this man is a murderer."—Could this emendation be eſtabliſhed, it

The juſtneſs of this explanation will, I apprehend, appear in a ſtill ſtronger light, if we try it (as all explantions of ſcripture ought to be tried) by conſidering in one view the whole paſſage from whence the text is taken, and then ſubjoin ſuch a paraphraſe of it as the meaning here affixed to St. James's words requires. The entire context is as follows.

" If ye fulfil the royal law, according to " the ſcripture, THOU SHALT LOVE THY " NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF, ye do well; " but if ye have reſpect to perſons, ye com- " mit ſin, and are convinced of the law as " tranſgreſſors. FOR WHOSOEVER SHALL " KEEP THE WHOLE LAW, AND YET OF- " FEND IN ONE POINT, HE IS GUILTY OF " ALL. For he that ſaid, Do not commit " adultery, ſaid alſo, Do not kill. Now, if " thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill,

would certainly remove all difficulty. But it is not ſupported by any manuſcript. And I doubt much whether the word ενοχος is ever uſed by any good writer, *ſingly* and *abſolutely* to ſignify *guilty*. It is generally found in conſtruction with ſome noun to which it has a reference, and by which its ſenſe is determined. Thus it is ſaid, Matth. v. 21. ενοχος τη κρισει; and, xxvi. 66. ενοχος θανατου; and in Demoſthenes, and other claſſical writers, ενοχος τοις νομοις, &c. &c.

" thou

" thou art become a tranſgreſſor of the law. " So ſpeak ye, and ſo do, as they that ſhall " be judged by the law of liberty. For " he ſhall have judgement without mercy, " that hath ſhewed no mercy, and mercy " rejoiceth againſt judgment."

If the principles advanced in this diſcourſe be true, and the concluſions juſt, the ſenſe of this very obſcure paſſage will be what is here ſubjoined.

If you fulfil the great law of LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELVES, (which, having been adopted, explained, and enforced by our SPIRITUAL SOVEREIGN, CHRIST, and made one of the two great branches of his religion, may be juſtly called the ROYAL LAW); if, I ſay, you fulfil this law in all its various parts, you do well. But if you ſhow ſuch an uncharitable reſpect of perſons as I have ſpecified above, you thereby violate that royal law, you commit a great ſin, and muſt expect the puniſhment due to that ſin. There is indeed, I know, a doctrine prevalent among you, which ſome of you may be apt to think will ſecure you from this puniſhment. You have been told by your Jewiſh inſtructors, not only that a life of virtue in general will atone

for

for the habitual practice of any ſingle vice, but, that, if you obſerved punctually *any one great precept of the law*, and violated all the reſt, it ſhould be well with you, and your days ſhould be prolonged, and you ſhould poſſeſs the earth*. You may therefore poſſibly flatter yourſelves, that although you do perpetually tranſgreſs the great law of charity, by an undue reſpect of perſons, yet, on account of your obedience to the moral law in other inſtances, you will not only eſcape puniſhment, but obtain reward. But this is a moſt dangerous and deluſive notion. It is one of thoſe old judaical prejudices that ſtill retain their hold upon your minds, where they have been early and deeply impreſſed by the corrupt traditions and falſe gloſſes of your rabbinical interpreters of the law. But be not deceived. It is ſo far from being true, as you have been taught to think, that *he who obſerves one great precept of the law, obſerves the whole*, that the very reverſe of this is the truth. For I ſay unto you, that WHOSOEVER SHALL KEEP THE WHOLE LAW, AND YET OFFEND IN ONE POINT, HE IS GUILTY OF

* See Pocock on Hoſea xiv. 2. p. 683; and Whitby on James ii. 11.

ALL;

ALL; *ſo far*, I mean, *guilty of all*, that he ſhall be no more entitled either to impunity or to reward, than if he had tranſgreſſed in every point, inſtead of one. For you know very well, that "HE WHO SAID, DO NOT "COMMIT ADULTERY, SAID ALSO, DO "NOT KILL." Every precept of the law proceeds from the ſame divine lawgiver. If therefore "you commit no adultery, yet if "you kill," if you obſerve one command and break another, you rebel againſt that divine lawgiver, you plainly become a tranſgreſſor of his law in *one* inſtance, and muſt conſequently ſuffer the puniſhment annexed *to that tranſgreſſion* notwithſtanding the punctuality of your obedience in all other inſtances. This perhaps you will think a hard ſaying, and may have entertained hopes that you ſhould experience more indulgent treatment under the law of the Goſpel, which you have ſo often heard emphatically ſtyled THE LAW OF LIBERTY. And ſuch, in many important ſenſes, it certainly is. It has delivered you from the heavy yoke of ceremonial obſervances; it has ſet you free from the "curſe of the law, from the miniſtration of "death, from the letter that killeth," and has

has called you into "the glorious liberty of "the children of God*." "SO SPEAK YE, "then, AND SO DO, AS THEY THAT SHALL "undoubtedly BE JUDGED BY THE LAW OF "LIBERTY." But miſtake not the nature of this LIBERTY. Do not fancy it to be a liberty of tranſgreſſing any precept which you find it difficult to obſerve. Though the Goſpel has emancipated you from the ſlavery of the *ritual* law, yet it has not in the ſmalleſt degree releaſed you from the obligations of the *moral law*. On the contrary, it confirms and eſtabliſhes that law. Were it to allow, or even connive at, the indulgence of any one favourite paſſion, it would be a law, not of *liberty*, but of *licentiouſneſs*. It will not therefore, it cannot, ſuffer the breach even of one ſingle divine command to paſs unpuniſhed. HE, conſequently, "SHALL HAVE JUDGE-"MENT WITHOUT MERCY, THAT HATH "SHEWED NO MERCY:" he that tranſgreſſes the great law of *mercy*, or Chriſtian charity, ſhall not, on account of his obedience in other reſpects, be exempted by the *mercy* of God from the puniſhment due to that offence. But if, on the contrary, he uſes his beſt en-

* Gal. iii. 13. 2 Cor. iii. 7. Rom. viii. 21.

deavours

deavours to fulfil every precept in the Goſpel, and eſpecially that moſt important one of *mercy*, or *univerſal love*, then ſhall "MERCY "REJOICE AGAINST JUDGEMENT:" his caſual tranſgreſſions and infirmities ſhall meet with *mercy* at the hand of his Almighty Judge; and the ſame compaſſion ſhall at the laſt day be graciouſly extended to him, which he himſelf has ſhewn to his offending or his diſtreſſed fellow-creatures *.

* The truth of the interpretation here given, receives great confirmation from ſome remarks lately communicated to me by a very learned and ingenious friend. He obſerves, that the concluding clauſes of the 9th, 10th, and 11th verſes of the 2d Chapter of St. James, muſt neceſſarily be conſidered as equivalent to each other. Theſe three verſes are as follows.

V. 9. If ye have reſpect of perſons, ye commit ſin, and *are convinced of the law as tranſgreſſors.*

V. 10. *For*, whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, *he is guilty of all.*

V. 11. *For*, he that ſaid, Do not commit adultery, ſaid alſo, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, *thou art become a tranſgreſſor of the law.*

To every one that conſiders theſe verſes attentively, as connected with each other, and particularly the force of the illative particle *for*, in the beginning of the two laſt, it will be evident, that the 10th is meant to prove the truth of the 9th, and the 11th of the 10th. But the proof entirely fails, and the 10th and 11th verſes are left without meaning, unleſs the clauſes in each verſe, which are printed in italics, were intended to convey preciſely the ſame idea. If this be admitted, the ſenſe affixed to the text, in the foregoing diſcourſe, is fully eſtabliſhed.

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

JAMES ii. 10.

WHOSOEVER SHALL KEEP THE WHOLE LAW, AND YET OFFEND IN ONE POINT, HE IS GUILTY OF ALL.

IT has, I hope, been ſufficiently proved, that the interpretation given of theſe words, in the preceding diſcourſe, is not arbitrary and conjectural; but grows out of the context and the occaſion, and is conformable to the whole tenour of St. James's argument, and the particular object he had in view. It makes no greater abatement in the apoſtle's expreſſion, than the peculiar ardour and energy of the ſcripture-language, and the conciſe ſententiouſneſs of proverbial maxims, abſolutely

abſolutely require; no greater than is authorized by the ſoundeſt rules of criticiſm, and the practice of the ſobereſt expoſitors in many ſimilar inſtances. At the ſame time, it ſeems to ſtand clear of all the objections which have been uſually urged againſt the text. It leaves no room to charge it with extravagant and undiſtinguiſhing ſeverity, and the doctrine it preſents to us is confirmed by the whole tenour of holy writ.

Every one in the leaſt converſant with ſcripture muſt know, that the rewards of Chriſtianity are there promiſed to thoſe only who, to the beſt of their power, endeavour "to "ſtand perfect and compleat in all the will of "God*;" and that its puniſhments are denounced againſt every habitual ſin of every kind, without any exception made in favour of thoſe who offend in one point only, and obſerve all the reſt. And as this is the univerſal language of ſcripture, ſo is it perfectly conformable to every principle of reaſon, juſtice, and equity.

In regard to a future recompence, the caſe will not admit a doubt. Eternal life

* Col. iv. 12.

being

being the free and voluntary gift of God, he may certainly give it on whatever terms he thinks fit to preſcribe. The terms he *has* preſcribed are, *faith in Chriſt*, and *obedience to all his laws*. Whoever therefore does not comply with the terms required, can have no claim to the favour granted on thoſe terms, and thoſe only. Although the offender in one point may poſſibly go ſo far as to flatter himſelf that he ſhall not be *puniſhed* for his offence, yet he can never ſurely expect to be *rewarded* for it. It would indeed be ſtrange, if all who had only one favourite vice ſhould be admitted to a ſtate of felicity hereafter. For, ſince different men are, by their different inclinations, led to tranſgreſs in different ways, it muſt by this means come to paſs, that ſinners of every denomination would find their way to heaven. And thus, inſtead of meeting there, as we are taught to expect, with "the ſpirits of juſt men made "perfect *," and an illuſtrious aſſembly of ſaints and angels, we ſhould find ourſelves ſurrounded, in the very manſions of bliſs, with ſuch ſort of company as we ſhould be aſhamed to be ſeen in upon earth.

* Heb. xii. 23.

Nothing therefore can be more undeniably reaſonable and juſt, than that the habitual tranſgreſſor of any one divine command, ſhould be excluded from future happineſs. Yet ſtill perhaps it may be thought hard, that he ſhould be doomed to future miſery. There is ſcarce any thing we are apt to think ſo reaſonable, and ſo natural, as that a number of good qualities ſhould atone for one bad habit, and ſhelter us from puniſhment, at leaſt, if not entitle us to reward. Yet why ſhould we expect this from the Goſpel diſpenſation, when in the ordinary courſe of God's providence we find it quite otherwiſe? How often do we ſee, in the affairs of this world, not only that *one habitual vice*, but that *one ſingle wrong action*, will, in ſpite of a thouſand excellencies, draw after it the ruin of fortune, fame, and every earthly comfort? The caſe is the ſame in the œconomy of nature, and the artificial inſtitutions of civil ſociety. The health of the human body is the reſult of perfect order in every part. If the ſlighteſt member be indiſpoſed, it diſturbs the eaſe of the whole, and "every member ſuffers with "it." In the body politic, a compleat obedience

dience to the laws is the only title to the protection of the ſtate; and a ſingle crime, notwithſtanding all our other ſervices, will render us obnoxious to its puniſhments. Add to this, that in all compacts and covenants which we enter into with one another, concerning our worldly affairs, the breach of any one eſſential condition vacates the covenant, and deprives us of all the benefits we claim under it. Now, the title we have to everlaſting happineſs hereafter is founded ſolely, not on the precarious ground of our own imperfect ſervices; for "we are all unprofitable "ſervants*;" but on the ſure baſis of that efficacious covenant, which was made between God and us through the mediation of our Redeemer, and which he ſealed with his own blood upon the croſs. All the precepts of the goſpel are ſo many conditions of this covenant, which we have promiſed, and which we are bound, to obſerve. If therefore we wilfully and habitually violate any one of theſe conditions, though we religiouſly obſerve all the reſt, we evacuate the covenant, we forfeit our *federal right* (the only right

* Luke xvii. 10.

we have) to the pardon of our ſins, and conſequently lay ourſelves open again to the puniſhment that is naturally due to them. Where then can be the ground for complaining of ſeverity in this reſpect? What pretence can we have for murmuring at our judge, if he obſerves the ſame meaſures of juſtice in the next world, which the general courſe of his providence in this gives us reaſon to expect; if he treats us, in a future ſtate, with no greater rigour than we ourſelves, in our moſt important concerns, think it equitable and prudent to exerciſe towards each other?

But will not God then judge us in mercy? Will he have no compaſſion on human infirmity? Will he be extreme to mark and to puniſh every thing that is done amiſs, notwithſtanding the punctuality of our obedience in all other reſpects?

That God will judge us in mercy there can be no doubt; what, alas! would become of the very beſt of us, if he did not? But that he will ſuffer his mercy to annihilate his juſtice, by allowing any one of his laws to be inſulted with impunity, is what no reaſonable man can poſſibly ſuppoſe. We need not be much afraid

afraid of leaving no room for the exercise of mercy. After we have done all we can, after we have kept the whole law, without exception, with all the care and punctuality we are able; there will be still enough left for God to pardon, and the most perfect of us will have abundant occasion for the utmost display of his clemency towards us. In our observance of *every* law, there will be innumerable defects and errors, which are the proper objects of divine compassion. These he has promised to forgive, on our sincere repentance, for the sake, and through the merits, of Christ Jesus; and of these there will be so very competent a sum, that it will be perfectly needless, and extremely dangerous, to enflame the account by any superfluous addition of voluntary transgressions. If our best virtues can, with all their own blemishes, obtain acceptance through the intercession of our Redeemer, they do full as much as we have any reason to expect from them. They have no superabundant merit of their own; and can therefore have none to spare for other purposes, to serve as a covering for some favourite sin.

The reſult then of the whole is, that the only ſure ground of admiſſion to heaven, and of ſecurity againſt future puniſhment, is an unreſerved (though too often, God knows, imperfect) obedience to *every* precept in the Goſpel. There is indeed always *one* which we find it more difficult to obſerve than the reſt, and which for that reaſon we are very deſirous not to obſerve at all. But if we are in earneſt about our everlaſting welfare, our obedience in *this* point alſo, however painful, is indiſpenſably neceſſary. It is that croſs which we are ordered to take up, when we are commanded to follow Chriſt. It is the yoke he impoſes upon us, the burthen he requires us to bear. To decline this, is at once to reject the terms of our ſalvation, and to forfeit all pretenſions to divine favour. It is to no purpoſe to urge the exactneſs of our obedience in *other* inſtances. Our good deeds can be no otherwiſe acceptable in the ſight of God, than as they flow from a principle of love to him, and obedience to his laws, as revealed to us in the Goſpel of his bleſſed Son. But if we conſtantly tranſgreſs theſe laws in any one point, it is impoſſible that our obſervance

ſervance of the reſt ſhould proceed from any religious motive. If ſuch a motive influenced us in *ſome* points, it would influence us in *every* point, and would never allow us to perſiſt in a direct oppoſition to the commands of the God we loved, even in the moſt trivial inſtance. The love of ourſelves, the love of power, of praiſe, of pleaſure, of gain, may in many caſes lead us to virtue; and it will be evident that we followed no worthier guide, if, when they lead us to vice, we follow them without reluctance, and are as ready to *break* any of God's laws at their ſuggeſtion, as to *obſerve* them.

Let us bring this matter home to our own boſoms, let us judge from our own ſentiments and feelings on ſimiliar occaſions. Should we think that man a ſincere friend to us, who, where it coincided with his natural propenſities, where it flattered his vanity or indulged his pride, where it ſerved his ambition or promoted his intereſt, would very readily ſhow us any mark of kindneſs and regard; but, where it thwarted any of theſe views, would moſt ſhamefully deſert us, although in the utmoſt need of his aſſiſtance?

Or, ſhould we think that ſervant worthy of his hire, and of our favour, who, although in other points he behaved well, yet in one material part of his buſineſs, where his ſervice was moſt neceſſary, and moſt acceptable to us, acted in direct oppoſition to our expreſs orders? Should we not call the one a deceitful friend, and the other a worthleſs ſervant, and renounce them both, with the contempt and indignation they deſerved? And how then can we imagine that God will accept ſuch a ſervice at our hands, as the meaneſt man amongſt us would think an inſult upon him? How can we ſuppoſe that he will be content with the leavings of our paſſions; will be ſatisfied with our obſervance of thoſe laws which we have not perhaps the leaſt inclination or temptation to tranſgreſs; and overlook our diſobedience in that *only point* where we *can* ſhow the ſincerity of our attachment to him; where our paſſions and our intereſts intefere with our duty, and ſtrongly prompt us to rebel againſt our Maker?

"Let then every one that names the name "of Chriſt depart from iniquity*" of every

* 2 Tim. ii. 14.

kind

kind. Let him " eſchew his own peculiar " wickedneſs." Let him take a reſolution of immediately relinquiſhing that favourite ſin, whatever it be which, ſo long as he nouriſhes it in his boſom, muſt for ever render him odious in the ſight of God, and as effectually exclude him from reward, and expoſe him to a certain degree of puniſhment, as if he had offended in all points, inſtead of one.

This is the true, the genuine doctrine of holy writ. The doctrine of the world, I know, is of a very different complexion; and we have been favoured with ſyſtems of morality, and plans of education, of a much more compliant, and commodious, and indulgent temper *. The ſubſtance of them is comprized in a few words; " adulation to thoſe " we deſpiſe, courteſy to thoſe we hate, " connections without friendſhip, profeſſions " without meaning, good-humour without " benevolence, good manners without morals, " appearances ſaved and realities ſacrificed."

* The well-known letters, of a deceaſed nobleman to his ſon, were publiſhed a few months before this ſermon was preached at St James's.

Theſe

Theſe are the maxims which are now to enlighten and improve mankind; and, as they come recommended with every advantage that wit, and eaſe, and elegance of compoſition, can give them, there is but too much reaſon to apprehend that a large part of the riſing generation will receive theſe oracles with implicit faith, and conſider their authority as ſovereign and ſupreme in ſome of the moſt eſſential articles of moral conduct. The times did not ſeem to call for any new encouragements to licentiouſneſs. But what elſe can be expected, when (as the prophet complains) "men for-"ſake the fountain of living water, and hew "them out ciſterns, broken ciſterns, that "can hold no water *;" when, deſerting the plain road of moral rectitude which revelation ſets before them, they ſtrike out into devious and crooked paths, and form a fanciful ſyſtem of their own, in which every thing is modelled exactly to their mind; in which vices are transformed into virtues, and virtues into vices, juſt as it happens to ſuit their particular taſte and convenience? Can there poſſibly be a more convincing proof of the utter in-

* Jer. ii. 13.

ability

ability of human wiſdom, even in its moſt improved and exalted ſtate, to undertake the direction of our moral behaviour, and the abſolute neceſſity of light from above to guide our ſteps aright, even in what we are pleaſed to call this *enlightened age?* Can any thing more clearly ſhow the infinite obligations we are under to Chriſtianity, for taking this important buſineſs out of the hands of man, and placing it in the hands of God; for marking out to us one ſtraight, undeviating line of conduct, and forbidding us, under the ſevereſt penalties, to turn aſide from it "to the right "hand or to the left?" Who does not now ſee the wiſdom, the reaſonableneſs, the utility of the doctrine in the text, that "whoſoever "ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend in "one point, he is guilty of all?" Who does not ſee, that to recede one tittle from the true meaning of this declaration, is to open a door for the admiſſion of every imaginable iniquity? When once we begin to queſtion the neceſſity of *univerſal holineſs*; when once we begin to make laws for ourſelves, and to determine peremptorily that *this* virtue is illiberal, and *that* impracticable, *this* vice a pardonable frailty, and *that* a neceſſary accompliſhment

pliſhment, it is eaſy to perceive, that there muſt ſoon be an end of all diſtinction between right and wrong. If one man, for inſtance, thinks that adultery and hypocriſy are in certain circumſtances, and on certain occaſions, allowable; why may not another claim the like indulgence for anger, pride, ambition, or revenge, and rank *them* alſo in the number of genteel and reputable vices? There is, in fact, hardly a crime in nature which has not ſomewhere or other a patron and defender. And thus, if every man, inſtead of eſchewing his own peculiar wickedneſs, is to have an exemption granted him from every reſtraint which he happens to think inconvenient, the duties of religion will be all picked out of the Goſpel one by one, till there is not a ſingle virtue left, which may not be evaded whenever we think fit.

This inſtance then, among a thouſand others may ſerve to convince us, how dangerous it would be to allow the ſmalleſt latitude in the terms and meaſures of obedience; and how neceſſary it is for thoſe, who are the appointed gaurdians of EVANGELICAL TRUTH, to watch over it with unremitted vigilance; and on no account to lower

lower the ſublime tone of goſpel morality, in order to make it ſpeak a ſofter language, and accommodate it to the fanciful conceits and corrupt caſuiſtry of worldly wiſdom. Men may undoubtedly *act* by whatever rule they pleaſe; but the rule by which they will be *judged* is that of the Goſpel; and all that *we* can do is to lay it plainly and fairly before them, and warn them loudly of the danger of following any other guide. They *may* fancy, if they will, that improved and elevated minds are above *vulgar reſtraints*; that what is vice in a low ſtation, by aſcending into a ſuperior region leaves its dregs behind, and is ſublimated into virtue; that diſſimulation, though a baſe coin, is a neceſſary one *; and that the groſſeſt irregularities, when they help to embelliſh our manners, are not vices of the heart, but little infirmities of youth, which are ſure to meet with indulgence here, and impunity hereafter. If men of ingenuity *chuſe* to amuſe themſelves with ſuch imaginations as theſe; and if others think it prudent to take *them* for their guide rather than *God*, they muſt do it at their own peril. But they

* A *heathen* moraliſt was, however, it ſeems, of a different opinion. Ex omni vita ſimulatio & diſſimulatio tollenda eſt. Cic. De Off. l. iii. c. 15.

who

who pretend to any principle, or any religion, will do well to remember, that *He* who has the ſole right of regulating our conduct, and who alone can inform us on what terms he will receive or reject us for ever, *He* has preſcribed to us a very different courſe of behaviour. He requires from us, not merely the *appearance*, but the *reality*; not the "form "only, but the power of godlineſs." He holds out the ſame rule of life to high and low, to rich and poor: "He regardeth not the per-"ſons of men;" and, if he has given any one human being "a licence to ſin," let that licence be produced. He commands us not to *conform* to a corrupt world, not to *flatter* and *diſſemble*, in order to pleaſe and deceive all mankind, but, "IN SIMPLICITY AND GOD-"LY SINCERITY, to have our converſation in "the world *." What *ſome* call pardonable infirmities, *He* calls vices of the heart; and plainly tells us that *they defile the man* †. And, to cut off all hopes of indulgence to any favourite ſin, even though ſurrounded with a conſtellation of virtues, he declares, that "whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and "yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

* 2 Cor. i. 12. † Matth. xv. 18.

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

LUKE, iv. 17, 18, 19, 20.

AND THERE WAS DELIVERED UNTO HIM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ESAIAS; AND WHEN HE HAD OPENED THE BOOK, HE FOUND THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS WRITTEN,

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE HATH ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR; HE HATH SENT ME TO HEAL THE BROKEN-HEARTED, TO PREACH DELIVERANCE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERING OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND; TO SET AT LIBERTY THEM THAT ARE BRUISED,

TO PREACH THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.

AND HE CLOSED THE BOOK, AND HE GAVE IT AGAIN TO THE MINISTER, AND SAT DOWN; AND THE EYES OF ALL THEM THAT WERE IN THE SYNAGOGUE WERE FASTENED ON HIM.

IN this manner did our gracious Redeemer open his divine commiſſion; with a dignity and a tenderneſs, both of language and

of

of ſentiment, which we ſhall in vain look for in any other public teacher of religion. We may eaſily conceive, that after he had uttered this noble prophecy, "the eyes of all them "that were in the ſynagogue" would be "faſtened on him." They all immediately "bare him witneſs, and wondered at the "gracious words that proceeded out of his "mouth." This admiration indeed of theirs ſoon gave way to far other emotions, and, in conſequence of the juſt reproof they received from him, for their perverſe and ſenſeleſs prepoſſeſſions againſt him "they were filled with "wrath, and thruſt him out of their city *." But we, who have no ſuch prejudices and paſſions as theirs to miſlead our judgments and overpower our natural feelings, muſt neceſſarily be filled with love and reverence towards him, when we read that ſublime and affecting declaration of his intentions, which is conveyed in the words of the text. We cannot but perceive that "the Spirit of the "Lord was indeed upon him," and that he was in truth the perſon to whom the paſſage in Iſaiah, which he recited, evidently referred. We know that our Lord moſt compleatly ve-

* Luke, iv. 28, 29.

rified

rified the words of the prophet, both in their literal and their ſpiritual meaning. He preached the Goſpel to the poor in fortune, the poor in ſpirit, and the poor in religious knowledge. He healed the broken-hearted; he raiſed and comforted thoſe that were oppreſſed with calamity, with diſeaſe, and with ſin. To him that was bowed down, with infirmity either of body or of ſoul, his language was, "Son, be of good cheer, thy ſins "be forgiven thee; go in peace, and ſin no "more." "He ſtrengthened the weak hands, "and confirmed the feeble knees; he ſaid to "them that were of a fearful heart, Be ſtrong, "fear not, behold your God will come. He "will come, and ſave you*" "He gave "ſight alſo to the blind;" he removed the film from the mental, as well as from the corporeal eye; and to thoſe that "ſat in "darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of death," he diſcloſed at once the chearful light of day, and the ſtill more glorious light of divine truth. "To the captives," to them that were "bruiſed, he preached deliverance." He preached a doctrine which not only re-

* Iſaiah xxxv. 3, 4.

leaſed from ſpiritual bondage thoſe that had been enthralled and led captive by their ſins, but ſo ſoftened and ſubdued the moſt ferocious minds, and diffuſed throughout the earth ſuch a ſpirit of mildneſs, gentleneſs, mercy, and humanity, that the heavy chains of perſonal ſlavery were gradually broken in moſt parts of the Chriſtian world; and they that had been for ſo many ages *bruiſed* by the cruel and oppreſſive hand of pagan maſters, were at length ſet free.

Thus did our bleſſed Lord accompliſh what the prophet foretold, and what he, by the inſpiration of that "ſpirit which was upon "him," ſo explicitly applied to himſelf. It is therefore evidently incumbent on thoſe who are the appointed teachers of his religion, and more eſpecially on that VENERABLE SOCIETY, whoſe profeſſed deſign and province IS THE PROPAGATION OF HIS GOSPEL IN FOREIGN PARTS, to tread as nearly as they can in the ſteps of their heavenly maſter, and carry on, to the beſt of their abilities, that gracious and benevolent work which he begun. It was plainly one great purpoſe of his life to relieve miſery of every kind, and under every

ſhape;

ſhape; and his chief attention was, agreeably to his declaration in the text, beſtowed on the moſt indigent, the moſt ignorant, the moſt helpleſs, and the moſt wretched of the human ſpecies. Too many there are, God knows, in every quarter of the unlightened world, who ſtand in need of our compaſſionate aſſiſtance towards the relief of their wants both temporal and ſpiritual; and it is a moſt melancholy conſideration, that ſo large a part of the habitable globe continues ſtill unacquainted with the bleſſings of true religion. But there is *one claſs* of our fellow-creatures which has ſuch diſtinguiſhed pre-eminence in miſery of almoſt every kind, and which ſo exactly correſponds to all that variety of wretchedneſs enumerated in the text, that one would almoſt be tempted to think our Saviour actually alluded to them, and had their caſe among the other great events of futurity, in his eye. For when he ſpeaks of the "poor, "the broken-hearted, the blind, the captive, "the bruiſed," who can forbear thinking on that unhappy race of beings, the AFRICAN SLAVES in our Weſt Indian Colonies? If

there are any human creatures in the world who concentrate in themſelves every ſpecies of evil here enumerated, who are at once poor, and broken-hearted, and blind, and captive, and bruiſed, our Negroe-ſlaves are beyond all compariſon thoſe creatures. Even in a literal ſenſe this deſcription is in ſeveral circumſtances a juſt picture of their ſituation; but, in a figurative and ſpiritual meaning, it may, with the ſtricteſt truth, be applied to them. They are in general conſidered as mere machines and inſtruments to work with, as having neither underſtandings to be cultivated nor ſouls to be ſaved. To the greater part not ſo much as the mere ceremony of baptiſm is adminiſtered; and ſcarce any enjoy ſufficient leiſure or aſſiſtance for a proper degree of inſtruction in the doctrines and the duties of religion. Sunday is indeed a day which they are generally indulged with for their own uſe; but they ſpend it commonly, not in attending public worſhip, or receiving private inſtruction, but in viſiting and trafficking with each other, or in cultivating their own little allotments of land, for which,

except

except in one iſland, that of Jamaica, they have ſeldom any other time allowed them *. Thus it comes to paſs, that in the Britiſh iſlands alone there are upwards of four hundred thouſand human beings †, of whom much the greateſt part live moſt literally without God in the world; without any knowledge of a Creator or Redeemer; without any one principle either of natural or revealed religion; without the idea of one moral duty, except that of performing their daily taſk, and eſcaping the ſcourge that conſtantly hangs over them. The conſequence is, that they are heathens, not only in their hearts, but in their lives, and, knowing no diſtinction between vice and virtue, they give themſelves up freely to the groſſeſt immoralities, without

* There is even a *market* held in the iſlands on Sundays, to which the ſlaves reſort; a profanation of the Lord's day as needleſs as it is irreverent. See *Hiſt. of Jamaica*, vol. ii. p 491, 492.

† The number of ſlaves in the ſeveral Weſt India iſlands now in our poſſeſſion, or reſtored to us by the treaty of the preſent year, were, a ſhort time before the war, ſaid to be about 410,000. The Negroes in the French iſlands were, in 1777, computed at 386,500. The Abbé Raynal ſtates the whole number of African ſlaves in America and the Weſt Indian iſlands at 1,400,000. *Hiſt. Phil.* vol. iv. p. 15.

ſo much as being conſcious that they are doing wrong *.

A condition ſuch as this, in which ſo many thouſands of our unoffending fellow-creatures are involved, cannot but excite the compaſſion of every feeling heart; and it muſt be matter of no ſmall ſurprize, and of the deepeſt concern, that, excepting a few inſtances, which deſerve the higheſt praiſe, no effectual means have yet been put in practice, either on the part of thoſe individuals who are moſt nearly intereſted in the welfare of theſe poor wretches, or of the government under which they live, to reſcue them out of this ſpiritual captivity, ſo much worſe than even that temporal one (heavy as it is) to which they are condemned. Almoſt the only conſiderable attempts that have been made to deliver them from this deplorable ſtate of ignorance, have been made by this venerable Society; which has had this object, among others, conſtantly in view, and in the proſecution of it has not been ſparing either of labour or expence,

* We are informed, on good authority, that the Negroes are allowed an *unlimited indulgence* in thoſe vices which are expreſsly reprobated by the Chriſtian doctrine. *Hiſt. of Jamaica*, vol. ii. p. 409, 414, 424.

But

But it muſt be owned that our endeavours have not hitherto been attended with the deſired ſucceſs. This, however, has been owing, not to what ſome are willing to ſuppoſe, an impoſſibility in the nature of the thing itſelf; not to any abſolute incapacity in the Africans to receive or retain religious knowledge (a pretence contradicted by the beſt teſtimony, and by repeated experience) but to *accidental*, and, I truſt, *ſurmountable* cauſes: to the prejudices formerly entertained by many of the planters againſt the inſtruction and converſion of their ſlaves; to the want which the latter have experienced of ſufficient time and opportunity for this purpoſe; to the abject, depreſſed, degraded, uncivilized, unbefriended, immoral ſtate, in which the Negroes have been ſo long ſuffered to remain; to the very little attention paid to them on the part of government; to the almoſt total want of laws to protect and encourage them, and to ſoften, in ſome degree, the rigours of their condition*; to the neceſſity,

* The regulations that have been formerly made in the Britiſh Weſt India iſlands, reſpecting the ſlaves, breathe a ſpirit of extreme ſeverity and rigour. There are laws in

ceſſity, in ſhort, which the Society itſelf has hitherto been under of liſtening to other claims of a very preſſing and important nature; and of employing a large ſhare of its fund in diſſeminating religious knowledge, and providing for the maintenance of public worſhip in other parts of his majeſty's dominions, where its aſſiſtance was much wanted, and moſt earneſtly and repeatedly ſolicited.

Theſe, I apprehend, are the principal obſtacles which have hitherto retarded the general converſion of the Negroes. But what then are we to do? Are we utterly to abandon this great concern, to conſider it as a deſperate, impracticable, viſionary project, to renounce all hopes of ever making any effectual progreſs in it, and of courſe, to conſign over ſeveral hundred thouſands of our fellow-creatures to the groſſeſt ignorance, irreligion, and heatheniſm for ever? It is impoſſible that any

abundance to *puniſh*, but ſcarce any to *protect* them. Even the wilful murder of a Negroe, from *wantonneſs* (as the law expreſſes it) and *bloody-mindedneſs*, is, in Barbadoes, puniſhed only by a ſmall pecuniary fine. Some undoubtedly meet with kind and indulgent maſters, whoſe natural humanity ſtands in the place of laws; but in general it is to be feared they feel moſt ſenſibly the want of LEGAL PROTECTION.

ſuch

ſuch idea ſhould ever enter into our minds. On the contrary, we ſhall certainly conſider the failure of our former attempts as a ſtrong and powerful call upon us to redouble our diligence and activity in this moſt laudable undertaking; and the impediments we have hitherto met with, far from extinguiſhing or abating our honeſt zeal, will, on the contrary, animate us with freſh ardour, and put us upon trying *new expedients* to ſurmount them. If ſuch be our reſolution, there are the ſtrongeſt reaſons to believe that our generous efforts will finally be crowned with ſucceſs. There are at preſent ſeveral favourable circumſtances, which may well inſpire us with hopes of a more proſperous iſſue to our pious labours. Many excellent tracts have within theſe few years been publiſhed, both in this and other countries, on the ſubject of Negroe-ſlavery; and a ſtill more excellent one will, I hope, ſoon ſee the light; all which can hardly fail by degrees to remove the prejudices (if any ſtill remain) of the Weſt Indian planters, and excite the attention of government to this moſt important

portant object; which muſt ſatisfy the former that it is not only their duty but their intereſt to conſult a little more both the preſent comfort and the future ſalvation of their ſlaves; and muſt convince the latter that it highly becomes the wiſdom of the provincial legiſlatures to give ſome countenance to the wretched Africans who are under their power, and to enact, as the French government has long ſince done, a CODE OF LAWS for their protection, their ſecurity, their encouragement, their improvement, and their converſion*. In fact, ſeveral of the moſt

* The ſyſtem of laws here alluded to, is called the CODE NOIR, and was firſt publiſhed in the year 1685. That copy of it which I have ſeen was printed at Paris in 12mo. 1767. It contains many admirable regulations reſpecting the diet, the cloathing, the treatment, the government, the diſcipline, the morals, and the religion of the Negroes. Amongſt other things, it obliges every planter to have his Negroes baptized, and properly inſtructed in the doctrines and duties of Chriſtianity. It allows the ſlaves for theſe purpoſes, and for days of reſt, not only *every Sunday*, but *every feſtival uſually obſerved by the Romiſh church*. It does not permit any *market* to be held on Sundays or holydays. It prohibits, under ſevere penalties, all maſters and managers from corrupting their female ſlaves. It does not allow the Negroe huſband, wife, and infant children, to be ſold ſeparately. It obliges the owners

moſt wealthy and moſt worthy proprietors of Weſt India eſtates, reſident as well in this country as in the Iſlands, have of late begun to ſee this matter in the right point of view. They have given repeated injunctions to their agents and managers, both to mitigate the hardſhips and promote the inſtruction of their Negroes; and the planters in general are no longer alarmed with an imagination which was formerly entertained, that when their Negroes become Chriſtians, they ceaſe to be ſlaves; and that in proportion as they are more religious, they grow leſs faithful, active,

owners to maintain their old, infirm, and decrepid ſlaves. It forbids them the uſe of torture, or of immoderate and inhuman puniſhments. If the Negroes are not fed and cloathed as the laws preſcribe, or if they are in any reſpect cruelly treated, they may apply to the *Procureur*, who is obliged by his office to protect and redreſs them. Such is the humane attention of the French nation to to their ſlaves. Many excellent laws have alſo been made in favour of the Indians employed by the Spaniards in South America. And beſides theſe, every diſtrict of Indians has a PROTECTOR; clergymen, paid by government, are appointed to inſtruct them; and the principal eccleſiaſtics are impowered to inform and admoniſh the civil magiſtrates, if any Indians are deprived of their juſt rights. The Negroes live there not only in eaſe but in luxury. See *Robertſon's Hiſtory of America*, 1ſt. edit. 4to. vol. ii. p. 350, 368, 374, 377, 493.

and

and induſtrious. Add to this, that the laſt war, amidſt a multitude of evils, ſuch as war neceſſarily produces, has been attended with one accidental effect, which, whatever may be thought of it in a commercial view, I do not ſcruple, in a religious one, to call a bleſſing. It has very greatly impeded and diminiſhed that opprobrious traffic, in which this country has for a long time taken the lead, *the ſlave-trade on the coaſt of Africa*. The conſequence of this has been, that ſeveral of the Weſt India planters have been induced to treat their ſlaves, eſpecially the females and their children, with more than ordinary tenderneſs and indulgence, in order to ſupply their want of Negroes by their own natural population *. Should this wiſe and humane practice

* There can be little doubt but that this might eaſily be effected by proper care and attention, by granting particular privileges, rewards, and even freedom, to the mothers of large families; by allowing more eaſe and better nouriſhment to the Negroes; and by a variety of other expedients, which humanity and ſound policy would naturally dictate. And although this might be attended perhaps at firſt with ſome trifling expence, and with ſome ſmall abatement of preſent exertion; yet all this would be amply overpaid by the prodigious ſavings of what is uſually expended in the purchaſe of

practice become an eſtabliſhed and univerſal cuſtom, it would exceedingly faciliate the work both of inſtruction and converſion, by furniſhing a ſucceſſion of young Negroe catechumens, well acquainted with the Engliſh language, familiariſed to the Engliſh cuſtoms, and uncorrupted by thoſe heatheniſh principles and ſavage manners with which the conſtant importation of freſh ſlaves from Africa has never failed to infect them, and to obliterate in a few weeks all thoſe ſentiments of morality and religion which it had been the work of years to impreſs upon their minds.

Theſe ſurely are conſiderations which afford the Society much fairer proſpects of ſucceſs than it has ever yet had. The harveſt in this quarter promiſes to be much more plenteous than we have hitherto found it, and may well encourage us to beſtow more of our attention upon it, and to ſend more labourers into it. Whenever this reſolution is taken, we ſhall undoubtedly think it ne-

of freſh ſlaves, and by the great and acknowledged ſuperiority of home-born Negroes to thoſe imported from Africa. See *Hiſtory of Jamaica*, p. 436, 437, 439.

ceſſary

ceſſary and right to begin with the Negroes on our truſt-eſtates in Barbadoes *; to try how far the work of converſion can actually be carried, to put in practice every poſſible expedient, firſt to civilize, and then to make them, what they undoubtedly may be made, not merely *nominal*, but *real* Chriſtians. The Society has indeed always ſhewn a moſt laudable ſolicitude both for the temporal and eternal welfare of the ſlaves employed on their plantations. They have given the moſt poſitive and peremptory orders to their managers to treat them with the utmoſt tenderneſs and humanity. They have appointed a catechiſt for the ſole purpoſe of inſtructing them in the doctrines and duties of Chriſtianity. They have taken care that their Negroes ſhall be regularly ſummoned to divine worſhip, and enjoy, without interruption, the ſacred reſt they are entitled to on the Lord's day. For this purpoſe they have allowed them for their own uſe the afternoon alſo of the preceding day; and

* Certain lands in Barbadoes, bequeathed to the Society by General Coddrington *in truſt* for particular uſes ſpecified in his will.

their

their journals are full of the ſtrongeſt and moſt earneſt injunctions to their catechiſt to exert his utmoſt zeal in impreſſing a right ſenſe of religion on the minds of their ſlaves; a point which the Society declare in their letters that *it is impoſſible for them ever to give up* *. Theſe, it muſt be owned, are wiſe and truly Chriſtian regulations, and highly ſuitable to the character of this venerable Society. But it is greatly to be doubted whether theſe directions have always been punctually complied with in the degree and to the extent propoſed; or if they have, there is but too much reaſon to fear, that they have by no means fully anſwered the good intentions of the Society. The truth is, theſe are *excellent beginnings*, but they are *only* beginnings, of an effectual and vital converſion of the Negroes. A foundation is laid, but it muſt be laid, I apprehend, ſtill broader and deeper before it will bear a ſuperſtructure of ſufficient ſtrength and ſolidity, "and ſo fitly framed "together as to grow into a holy temple un- "to the Lord, and a permanent habitation of

* See the Society's journals, 1769.

"God

"God through the ſpirit*." It is, in ſhort, the clear and decided opinion of every man who has conſidered the ſubject thoroughly, and has had opportunities of obſerving and ſtudying, for a long courſe of years, the temper, the diſpoſition, the manners, the capacities, the treatment, and the condition of our Negroe-ſlaves, that in their preſent ſtate of debaſement and degradation, ſunk as they are below the level of the human ſpecies; treated merely as animals doomed to labour; cut off almoſt entirely from the protection of the ſtate, and the advantages of ſocial life, with ſcarce any ſubſtantial comforts and indulgences to chear their ſpirits, to excite their ambition, to encourage their hopes, they are hardly capable of receiving any deep and laſting impreſſions of religion. In fact, a certain degree of improvement and civilization has been always found neceſſary to prepare the mind for the admiſſion of the divine truths of Revelation; and, unleſs the ſoil is a little tilled and dreſſed, and meliorated by a proper courſe of cultivation, the good ſeed will ſcarce ever ſtrike root in it, or at leaſt

* Epheſ. xi. 21, 22.

take

take ſuch firm hold upon it as to ſpring up with health and vigour, and "bring forth "fruit to perfection." If ever then we hope to make any conſiderable progreſs in our benevolent purpoſe of communicating to our Negroes the benefits and the bleſſings of religion, we muſt firſt give them ſome of the benefits and the bleſſings of ſociety and of civil government. We muſt, as far as is poſſible, attach them and their families inſeparably to the ſoil; muſt give them a little intereſt in it; muſt indulge them with a few rights and privileges to be anxious for; muſt ſecure them by fixed laws from injury and inſult; muſt inform their minds, correct their morals, accuſtom them to the reſtraints of legal marriage, to the care of a family and the comforts of domeſtic life; muſt improve and advance their condition gradually, *as they are able to bear it*; and even allow a certain number of the moſt deſerving to work out their freedom by degrees (according to the plan ſaid to be eſtabliſhed in ſome of the Spaniſh ſettlements) as a reward of ſuperior merit and induſtry, and of an uncommon progreſs

in the knowledge and the practice of Chriſtianity *.

All this may be done, as they who are beſt acquainted with the ſubject have aſſerted, and

* The Spaniſh regulation here alluded to is ſaid to have taken place at the Havannah; and is as follows. As ſoon as a ſlave is landed, his name, price, &c. are entered in a public regiſter; and the maſter is obliged by law to allow him one working day in every week to himſelf, beſides Sunday; ſo that if he chooſes to work for his maſter on that day, he receives the wages of a freeman for it; and whatever he gains by his labour on that day is ſo ſecured to him by law, that the maſter cannot deprive him of it. As ſoon as the ſlave is able to purchaſe another working day, the maſter is obliged to ſell it to him at a proportionable price, viz. one fifth part of his original coſt; and ſo likewiſe the remaining four days, at the ſame rate, as ſoon as the ſlave is able to redeem them: after which he is abſolutely free.—See *Mr. Sharp's Appendix to the Juſt Limitation of Slavery*, &c. p. 53.

There is ſomething wonderfully pleaſing and benevolent in this inſtitution. It were greatly to be wiſhed that ſome expedient of this kind might be *tried* at leaſt as an experiment, in ſome of the Engliſh iſlands. It is believed (on very juſt grounds, and after the matureſt conſideration of the ſubject) by men of great judgement and long experience in the management of Weſt India eſtates, that if the Negroes on any of our plantations were emancipated *gradually* (for every improvement of their ſituation muſt be *very gradual*) in ſome ſuch way as is here propoſed, and retained afterwards by their owners as day-labourers at a certain fair ſtipulated price, it would be an alteration no leſs advantageous to the planter than kind and compaſſionate to the Negroe.

I think

I think proved, without the ſmalleſt injury to the rights, the property, or the emoluments of the planter; and were a plan of this nature introduced firſt into the Societys' eſtates, there is every reaſon in the world to expect from it the moſt beneficial conſequences, not only in a religious, but even in a lucrative view. In the preſent ſituation indeed of thoſe eſtates, it cannot well be attempted. The embarraſſments, in which, by a ſeries of the moſt unfortunate incidents, they have for ſome time paſt been involved, have rendered it neceſſary for the Society to part with the management of them for a few years out of their own hands, which will render it unadviſeable, and indeed impracticable, to eſtabliſh for the preſent, in their full extent, the regulations now propoſed. Yet ſtill if any thing here ſuggeſted ſhould ſeem to deſerve the Societys' attention, they may at leaſt allow it to have ſome ſhare it their deliberations; they may be forming, digeſting, and arranging their future meaſures with a view to this great objects, and be gradually preparing the way for the compleat execution of them *at a proper time*; in which there can be no doubt but

they will have the hearty concurrence and aſſiſtance of that worthy and benevolent member of the Society to whom they have for the preſent conſigned their Weſt Indian property,

With regard to our miſſionaries in North America, in what ſtate they will remain after the great change which has ſo recently taken place on that continent, is as yet unknown; and therefore at preſent nothing more can with propriety be ſaid concerning them than this; that the intereſts of the Church of England in America will never be willingly abandoned by this Society; and that we ſhall ever retain, and, as far as we are able, give the moſt ſubſtantial proofs that we *do* entertain, a juſt and deep ſenſe of the merits of thoſe excellent perſons among our miſſionaries, who, amidſt the dangers and diſtreſſes of war, have preſerved their fidelity unſhaken, and through a long courſe of the ſevereſt trials have perſevered uniformly and ſteadily in the diſcharge of their duty to their country, to the Society, and to the ſeveral congregations entruſted to their care.

But there is ſtill another point which calls

at

at preſent for ſome part of our attention; I mean the Engliſh Proteſtants in the province of Canada. They are now ſaid to amount to ſeveral thouſands, ſettled in different parts of the country, and at conſiderable diſtances from each other. For the inſtruction of all theſe there are no more than three Proteſtant clergymen, and thoſe all foreigners, appointed and paid by government. There is not in the whole province a ſingle Engliſh clergyman of our own communion, nor is there a ſingle church belonging to the Proteſtants, they being obliged to make uſe of the Romiſh chapels.

Every one muſt be ſenſible that ſuch a proviſion as this, for the ſupport of public worſhip among our Proteſtant brethern in Canada, is exceedingly inadequate to their wants, and loudly calls for ſome addition and improvement. One ſhould naturally hope that government itſelf would, on a proper repreſentation of the caſe, extend its protection and aſſiſtance to ſo many deſerving ſubjects, and encreaſe the eſtabliſhment of Proteſtant miniſters in proportion to the great encreaſe of Proteſtant inhabitants; to which

probably there will now be very conſiderable acceſſions from the other American provinces. In the mean while, this Society will perhaps think it neceſſary to pay ſome regard to thoſe parts of Canada, where the Engliſh Proteſtants are moſt deſtitute of proper religious inſtruction, and moſt remote from all opportunities of joining in that mode of public worſhip which is conformable to their religious ſentiments.

Every exertion, however, that the Society may think fit to make in theſe reſpects, will be perfectly conſiſtent with that great and neceſſary work which has been recommended in this diſcourſe. The proper period for carrying *the whole of it* into execution muſt undoubtedly, for the reaſons already aſſigned, be at ſome diſtance; but the firſt ſteps towards it may certainly be taken without delay. We may, at leaſt, enquire more exactly into the effects produced by the labours of our Catechiſt on our own Negroes. We may ſend, if it ſhould appear neceſſary, freſh inſtructions to him, and may appoint miſſionaries to ſuch of the plantations as are willing to receive them. From theſe beginnings we may

advance

advance by degrees towards the completion of our deſign, till our plantation become (what I truſt it will one day be) a model for all the Weſt India iſlands to imitate; till it exhibit to the world a ſpectacle no leſs ſingular in its kind, than honourable to us and our religion, a little ſociety of *truly Chriſtian* Negroes, impreſſed with a juſt ſenſe, and living in the habitual practice, of the ſeveral duties they owe to God, to their maſters, to their fellow-labourers, and themſelves; governed by *fixed laws*, and by the exacteſt diſcipline, yet tempered with gentleneſs and humanity; enjoying ſome little ſhare of the comforts and advantages of ſocial and domeſtic life; ſeeing their children educated in the principles of morality and religion; performing their daily taſks with alacrity and fidelity; looking up to their maſters as their friends, their protectors, and benefactors; and conſoling themſelves for the loſs of their liberty and their native land, by the care taken to "make "their yoke eaſy and their burden light," to civilize their manners, to enlarge their underſtandings, to reform their hearts, and to open to them a proſpect into a better and a

happier country, where all tears ſhall be wiped from their eyes, and where ſorrow and *ſlavery* ſhall be no more.

A ſcene ſuch as this, which is far, I am perſuaded, from being a viſionary idea, would be delightful to humanity; would form a new ſchool for piety and virtue in the weſtern world, a ſeminary of religion for all the ſlaves of the neighbouring plantations and iſlands, perhaps ultimately for the whole coaſt of Africa; would be an example of decency, of order, of harmony, of induſtry, of happineſs, which the other planters would find it impoſſible to reſiſt; and would more effectually confute the various objections that have been made to the converſion of the African ſlaves than all the ſpeculative arguments in the world *.

And

* That ſuch a real and general converſion of the Negroes as is here propoſed is no romantic project, but a thing perfectly practicable; and that it would be highly beneficial both to the ſlaves and their proprietors, is evident from the progreſs already made in this work by the Moravian miſſionaries. In the Daniſh iſlands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John, they have proſelyted near 6,000 Negroes. They have alſo a congregation of ſeveral thouſands in the iſland of Antigua; and I have been aſſured by a gentleman of credit, who ſaw them

And let us not be deterred from this noble undertaking by the apprehenſion of that additional expence in which it may involve us. The demands upon us from other quarters, where we have formerly expended conſiderable ſums, will probably be continually growing leſs and leſs; the expences incurred on account of our Weſt Indian eſtates are now in a train of being gradually repaid, and even the ſavings from the miſſions now vacant in America (ſhould it be found impracticable or unadviſeable to re-eſtabliſh them) would be more than ſufficient to anſwer all the purpoſes of the propoſed undertaking. But ſhould it even require more than our revenues can ſupply, we need be under no apprehenſion of wanting proper ſupport. When once it is

them at public worſhip, that their deportment was remarkably ſerious, attentive, devout, and edifying. And they ſo greatly ſurpaſs all the other ſlaves in ſobriety, diligence, quietneſs, fidelity, and obedience, that the planters are anxious to have their Negroes put under the direction of the miſſionaries. In the French iſlands alſo, the converſion of the Negroes by the Romiſh prieſts and miſſionaries is univerſal. The conſequence is, that the French ſlaves are much more decent, honeſt, regular, and orderly, than thoſe of the Engliſh. If ſuch be the effects even of erroneous ſyſtems of faith, what might not be expected from the doctrines of the church of England, inculcated with equal zeal?

known

known that the civilization and the converſion of the Negroe-ſlaves is to be hereafter one of the grand leading objects of our pious labours, and a proper and practicable plan for that purpoſe is laid before the public, every heart, every hand will open on the occaſion; and there cannot be a doubt but that the encreaſe of our benefactions and ſubſcriptions will ſoon gratify our moſt ſanguine wiſhes. It is impoſſible that the generoſity, the humanity, I will add, the juſtice, of the Engliſh nation can ſuffer *near half a million* of their fellow-creatures to continue in the moſt deplorable ſtate of heatheniſm, irreligion, and vice, without giving the Society every aſſiſtance that may be neceſſary to extricate them out of it. It would be glorious to Great Britain to take the lead in this benevolent and truly Chriſtian enterprize. And allow me to add, that it is peculiarly incumbent on the people of this kingdom to exert their utmoſt liberality in alleviating the miſeries, both temporal and ſpiritual, of the wretched Africans; ſince they have been for many years (till interrupted by the late war) more largely

largely concerned in that inhuman merchandize of men, and have imported more ſlaves into the colonies, than any other nation in Europe. By their means principally have many thouſands, many millions, of human creatures been torn from their native land, from every bleſſing that was valuable, every connection that was dear to them; and, after paſſing in their voyage through incredible hardſhips and difficulties under which great numbers of them actually periſh *) have been landed in a country and among a people unknown to them; and, without any offence or fault of theirs, have been doomed to a perpetual ſervitude, a ſervitude too which they leave (the only inheritance they *have* to leave) entailed on their lateſt poſterity †.

Let

* In the paſſage, and in what is called *the ſeaſoning* in the iſlands, one third of the new-imported Negroes is ſometimes loſt. *Hiſt. of Jamaica*, vol. ii. p. 434. and *Benezet's Caution*, &c. p. 40. In a late trial at Guildhall it appeared, that a ſhip freighted with ſlaves, being reduced to a great ſcarcity of water, 130 *Negroes were hand-cuffed and thrown into the ſea!*

† In the year 1768 the number of ſlaves bought on the coaſt of Africa was 104,100. Of theſe 53,100 were bought by Britiſh merchants. The conſtant annual importation, and of courſe *the annual conſumption*, of Negroes in America and the Weſt Indies, is ſuppoſed to have been of late years,

on

Let then our countrymen make haſte to relieve, as far as they are able, the calamities they have brought on ſo large a part of the human race; let them endeavour to wipe away the reproach of having delivered over ſo many of their innocent fellow-creatures to a moſt heavy temporal bondage, both by contributing to ſoothe and alleviate that as much as poſſible, and by endeavouring to reſcue them from the ſtill more cruel bondage of ignorance and ſin. Let them, in ſhort, concur with the generous efforts of the Society "to heal the *broken-hearted*, "to preach deliverance to the *captives*, and "recovery of ſight to the *blind*, to ſet at "liberty them that are *bruiſed*, to preach "the acceptable year of the Lord."

on an average, about 60,000. The Abbé Raynal ſtates the total importation from Africa, ſince the firſt beginning of the ſlave-trade, at *nine millions of ſlaves*. *Hiſt. Phil.* vol. iv. p. 154. Surely it deſerves conſideration *again and again*, whether this cruel havock might not be prevented, *without any injury to the iſlands*, by ſome one of the methods above ſuggeſted; either by trying to cultivate the ſugar-cane by enfranchiſed blacks, or by giving ſuch encouragement to the population of the Negroes in our iſlands, as might render their encreaſe equal to the demand of the plantations, and preclude the neceſſity of further importation from Africa.

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

JOHN xiii. 23.

NOW THERE WAS LEANING ON JESUS' BOSOM ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES, WHOM JESUS LOVED.

THE perſon here deſcribed, is St. John the Evangeliſt, the author of that Goſpel which bears his name, and from which the text is taken. It was he who enjoyed the honourable diſtinction of being placed next to his divine maſter, and of leaning on his boſom at ſupper. He was, moreover, always one of thoſe whom our Lord admitted to his moſt confidential converſations and moſt intereſting tranſactions, eſpecially in the laſt awful and affecting ſcenes of his life; and he is ſcarce ever mentioned by any other name than that of

THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED*. Theſe circumſtances plainly mark the favourite and the friend: and, on the other hand, if we advert a little on the conduct of St. John towards our Lord during the courſe of his ſufferings, the very time when true friendſhip would be moſt apt to ſhow itſelf, we ſhall diſcover in it plain indications of a ſtrong and tender affection.

When our Saviour was betrayed by Judas, and apprehended by the Jews, though St. John had at firſt, with all the other diſciples, forſaken him and fled; yet his affection ſoon got the better of his fears, and prompted him to follow his Lord, at the utmoſt hazard of his own life, into the palace of the high-prieſt †. St. Peter did the ſame, but in a very ſhort time afterwards, exhibited a melancholy inſtance of human infirmity, and, notwithſtanding the moſt vehement and paſſionate profeſſions of inviolable attachment to Jeſus, he denied him three times with execrations and oaths. St. John's way of manifeſting his ſincerity was not by words, but by

* John xiii. 23; xix. 26. xx. 2; xxi. 7, 20.

† See Le Clerc, Doddridge, and other commentators on John xviii. 15, 16.

deeds.

deeds. He faithfully adhered to his divine maſter in the very midſt of his enemies, and with fond anxiety purſued him through all the various events of this diſtreſsful period of his life. After Jeſus was condemned and hung upon the croſs, caſting his eyes down from that dreadful eminence, he ſaw among the crowd "the diſciple whom he loved "ſtanding by*." It does not appear from the hiſtory that there were any other of the apoſtles that attended him in this laſt melancholy ſcene except St. John. They were terrified, it ſhould ſeem, with the danger of openly eſpouſing him at ſo critical a time. But, unawed by any ſuch apprehenſions, which all gave way to the ardour of his friendſhip, and the extremity of his grief, our Evangeliſt placed himſelf as near as he could to the croſs, to catch the dying looks, and to wait the laſt commands of his Lord and friend. Thoſe commands were ſoon given him, in the moſt affecting terms; and the truſt then repoſed in him was of ſuch a nature as plainly ſhowed what unbounded confidence his dying maſter placed in his fidelity and affection. For our

* John xix. 26.

Lord

Lord obſerving ſeveral women, and among them his mother, ſtanding near his croſs, fixed in grief, horror, and amazement, at that dreadful ſpectacle, he ſaid to his mother, "Woman, behold thy ſon; then, turning towards St. John, "Behold thy mother *." Words few and ſimple, but full of meaning, expreſſive of a thouſand tender ſentiments, both towards the diſtreſſed parent whom he left behind him, and the friend to whoſe care ſo ſacred a pledge was committed. St. John inſtantly ſaw the meaning, and felt the force of this moving bequeſt. He conſidered our Lord's mother as his own, and from that hour (as he himſelf with his uſual modeſty and ſimplicity tells us) "he took her to his "own home†."

Nor did his affection for his departed friend terminate here. It was continued after his crucifixion, to his memory, his character, and his religion. After a long life ſpent in teaching and ſuffering for that religion, he concluded it with a work of infinite utility, the reviſal of the three Goſpels already written,

* John xix. 26, 27. † Ib.

and

and the addition of his own to ſupply what they had omitted. With this view principally he gives us ſeveral of our Saviour's diſcourſes with his diſciples, which are no where elſe to be met with; and it is very obſervable, that theſe, as well as the many other occurrences of his life, which he introduces as ſupplemental to the other Evangeliſts, are ſuch as ſet his beloved maſter in the moſt amiable and graceful point of view, ſuch as a favourite diſciple would be moſt likely to ſelect, and moſt diſpoſed to enlarge upon. Of this kind, for inſtance, are our Saviour's diſcourſe with the woman of Samaria; the cure of the infirm man at the pool of Betheſda; the acquittal of the woman taken in adultery; the deſcription of the good ſhepherd and his ſheep; the affecting hiſtory of Lazarus; the condeſcending and expreſſive act of waſhing his diſciples feet; his inimitably tender and conſolatory diſcourſe to them juſt before his ſuffering; his moſt admirable prayer on the ſame occaſion; and his pathetic recommendation of his ſheep to St. Peter after his reſurrection. Theſe paſſages are to be found only in St. John's Goſpel,

and whoever reads them with attention will diſcover in them plain indications not only of a heaven-directed hand, but of a feeling and a grateful heart, ſmitten with the love of a departed friend, penetrated with a ſenſe of his diſtinguiſhed kindneſs, perfectly well informed and throughly intereſted, in every tender ſcene that it deſcribes, ſoothing itſelf with the recollection of little domeſtic incidents and familiar converſations, and tracing out not only the larger and more obvious features of the favourite character, but even thoſe finer and more delicate ſtrokes in it, which would have eluded a leſs obſerving eye, or leſs faithful memory, than thoſe of a beloved companion and friend.

From this ſhort detail it appears, that there ſubſiſted between our Saviour and St. John a real, ſincere, and tender friendſhip: and this fact being eſtabliſhed, will furniſh us with ſome remarks, of no ſmall importance to religion and to ourſelves.

The firſt is, that friendſhip is perfectly conſiſtent with the ſpirit of the Goſpel, and the practice of every duty that it requires at our hands. Who, indeed, but muſt grieve if

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it was not? Who but would grieve to find, that, in order to arrive at happineſs in the next world, it is neceſſary to renounce one of the greateſt bleſſings that can be poſſeſſed in this? For although, indeed, both the merits and the pleaſures of friendſhip have been ſometimes, by antient as well as modern writers, moſt extravagantly and injudiciouſly magnified; yet after all, it muſt be allowed, that when it is formed on right principles, and conducted with ſobriety and good ſenſe, there is ſomething in it ſo ſoothing, ſo congenial to the human mind; it is what the very beſt of men have been always ſo ſtrongly diſpoſed to cultivate and cheriſh; it ſo improves every enjoyment, and ſo lightens every misfortune; it is aſſociated generally with ſo many excellent qualities; it gives birth to ſo many generous ſentiments, ſo many noble and diſintereſted actions; it is, in ſhort, though not a virtue, yet ſomething ſo *very like* a virtue, that no one, who has ever taſted the genuine ſatisfaction it affords, can willingly conſent to part with it. He cannot eaſily be brought to believe that a religion, which not only allows but improves and exalts every

innocent and rational enjoyment, ſhould in this ſingle inſtance aſſume a tone of rigour quite foreign to his natural temper, and preclude us from one of the ſweeteſt conſolations that has ever yet been found out for the various afflictions of life. And in fact there is no need for any ſuch apprehenſions. The example of our Lord himſelf is alone ſufficient to ſatisfy us on this head. If *He* had his beloved companion and friend, we cannot ſurely be acting contrary to his ſentiments, if we alſo have ours.

But whence then, it is ſaid, that remarkable *ſilence* of the Goſpel on this ſubject? How comes it to paſs, that on the article of friendſhip, which has ſo much exerciſed the eloquence of Pagan writers, not one ſyllable is to be found in the whole New Teſtament, not one precept or direction, not even the ſmalleſt degree of commendation beſtowed upon it? The anſwer is obvious. To have made friendſhip a neceſſary part of Chriſtian obedience, would have been prepoſterous and abſurd. For that ſimiliarity of diſpoſition, and coincidence of ſentiment and affection, on which friendſhip is founded, do not depend

ſolely

ſolely on our own choice, are not under the direction of our own will; and therefore could not poſſibly be the proper objects of a divine command. Nor would it have been prudent to have expreſſed in the Goſpel any particular approbation of this connection. It might have inflamed that propenſity to it which nature had already made ſufficiently ſtrong, and which the injudicious encomiums of heathen moraliſts had raiſed to a romantic and a dangerous height. Our divine lawgiver ſhowed his wiſdom equally in what he enjoined, and what he left unnoticed. He knew exactly, what no Pagan philoſopher ever knew, where to be ſilent and where to ſpeak. It was not his intention, it was indeed far below his dignity, to ſay fine things upon popular ſubjects; pleaſing perhaps to a few, but utterly uſeleſs to the bulk of mankind. *His* object was of a much more important and extenſive nature: to inculcate the plain, humble, practical duties of piety and morality; the duties that were of univerſal concern and indiſpenſible obligation, ſuch as were eſſentially neceſſary to our well-being in this life, and our everlaſting happineſs in the next. Now the warm-

eſt admirers of friendſhip cannot pretend to raiſe it into *a duty*, much leſs into a duty of this high rank. It is a delightful, it is an amiable, it is often a laudable attachment; but it is not a neceſſary requiſite either to the preſent welfare or the future ſalvation of mankind in general, and conſequently is not of ſufficient importance to deſerve a diſtinct place in the Chriſtian ſyſtem. The utmoſt that could be done there was to ſhow (and it was ſufficiently ſhown by the example of our Lord) that a virtuous friendſhip does not militate againſt the *ſpirit* of his religion; but is, on the contrary, as we ſhall ſee preſently, improved and exalted by its precepts, and finds in them its beſt foundation and its firmeſt ſupport.

From the mere *ſilence* then of the Goſpel on this ſubject, no inference can be juſtly drawn againſt the lawfulneſs of friendſhip. But it is urged further, (and it is a circumſtance which ſeems to have had much weight with ſome very ingenious defenders of revelation) that it was one great object of the Chriſtian religion to introduce into the world a temper of univerſal benevolence and good-

will;

will; and with that view its buſineſs was, not to *contract*, but to *expand* our affections as much as poſſible; to throw down all the little mean fences and partitions, within which the human heart is too apt to intrench itſelf, and lay it open to nobler views, and a larger and more liberal ſphere of action. Hence it is imagined, that friendſhip muſt neceſſarily be inconſiſtent with the genius of that religion, becauſe it laviſhes on one object all that kindneſs and affection which ought to be diffuſed among the whole human race. And indeed, if friendſhip would be content with nothing leſs than the ſurrender of our whole ſtock of benevolence, without the leaſt reſerve for the reſt of our fellow-creatures, it might well be deemed a monopoly altogether incompatible with that free and general commerce of good offices, which the Goſpel certainly meant to extend to every quarter of the globe. But this ſurely is far from being a true ſtate of the caſe. We may diſcharge every tender office that friendſhip can demand, without neglecting any of thoſe ſocial duties which revelation enjoins. There are various gradations of affection, correſponding to the various

relations of life, all in perfect concord one with another, and contributing each their reſpective parts towards the compoſition of that harmony which ought to reign throughout the whole. Connubial tenderneſs, filial affection, fraternal fondneſs, parental love, all theſe are *partial* attachments, no leſs than friendſhip, yet theſe moſt certainly the Goſpel does not forbid. Why then ſhould friendſhip be thought leſs reconcileable than theſe with the temper of our religion? The truth is, the deſign of Chriſtianity was not to *extinguiſh*, but to *regulate* only, and reduce to their proper dimenſions, all our private and perſonal connexions. Within the wide circumference of Chriſtian charity, it allows us to form as many ſmaller circles of benevolence as we pleaſe. It requires only that our affections ſhould move in them under the controll of that ſovereign law of UNIVERSAL LOVE, which, like the great principle of ATTRACTION in the material world, is diffuſed throughout our moral ſyſtem, to guide, direct, and regulate the whole, and to reſtrain within proper limits every ſubordinate ſentiment and inferior movement of the ſoul.

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Under theſe reſtrictions, ſo far is Chriſtianity from being *adverſe* to any virtuous connections, that it actually provides a remedy for the greateſt imperfection under which they labour. It does, what in the fond hour of affection has been often wiſhed, but, till the Goſpel appeared, wiſhed in vain; it renders our friendſhips *immortal*. It revives that union which death ſeems to diſſolve; it reſtores us again to thoſe whom we moſt dearly loved, in that bleſſed ſociety of "juſt "men made perfect," which is to form, probably, one great part of our felicity in heaven.

II. But ſecondly; the example of our Lord, in ſelecting one beloved diſciple, does not only give his ſanction to friendſhip, but it teaches us alſo what *ſort* of friendſhip it is that he allows and authorizes. For, whatever thoſe qualities were which attracted his notice, and conciliated his affection, in the perſon of St. John, theſe, we may be ſure, are the proper conſtituents of a legitimate, a Chriſtian friendſhip. Now it does not appear that St. John was diſtinguiſhed by any of thoſe ſhowy intellectual accompliſhments which

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are of all others moſt apt to ſtrike our fancy and captivates our hearts, although, in fact, they are often much better calculated for the amuſement of a convivial hour, than for that conſtant fund of comfort and ſatisfaction through life, which we naturally expect from a well-formed friendſhip. That which principally attracts our notice, in his writings, and in his conduct, is a ſimplicity and ſingleneſs of heart, a fervent piety, an unbounded benevolence, an unaffected modeſty, humility, meekneſs, and gentleneſs of diſpoſition. Theſe are evidently the great characteriſtic virtues that took the lead in his ſoul, and break forth in every page of his Goſpel and his Epiſtles. Theſe then are the qualities we ought principally to regard in the choice of our friends, and to cultivate in ourſelves, if we would conciliate and preſerve their affections. Now it is very obſervable, that theſe qualities are the very virtues which are properly ſtiled *evangelical*, which the Chriſtian revelation more peculiarly recommends, and which diſtinguiſh it from all other religions that ever appeared in the world. A friendſhip, therefore, founded on

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theſe principles, is, ſtrictly and properly ſpeaking, *a Chriſtian friendſhip*, and it will be the direct oppoſite of thoſe celebrated inſtances of Pagan friendſhip, of which we hear ſo much in ancient ſtory. The characteriſtics of theſe commonly were, a haughty and overbearing ſpirit; a vindictive, implacable and impetuous temper; an intrepidity ſuperior to every danger, and every conſideration of juſtice, honeſty, and humanity, in behalf of thoſe partners in their iniquity whom they chuſe to call their friends. Such wild extravagances as theſe, as well as thoſe confederacies in vice, which young men, even now, ſometimes compliment with the name of friendſhip, are indeed diametrically oppoſite to the genius of Chriſtianity. But it would be as unfair to take our ideas of friendſhip from theſe corrupt perverſions of it, as to form our notions of liberty from the exceſſes of a lawleſs rabble, or our ſentiments of religion from the ravings of a delirious enthuſiaſt. To know what friendſhip really is, we muſt look for it in that ſacred repoſitory of every thing great and excellent, the Goſpel of Chriſt. We ſhall there not only

only ſee it actually exiſting in its utmoſt perfection in the perſon of Chriſt and his beloved diſciple; but we ſhall find that almoſt all the virtues on which his religion lays the greateſt ſtreſs, have a natural tendency to generate it in our ſouls. Examine only the ſeveral branches of benevolence, as they lie in the ſacred writings, and eſpecially in that exquiſite picture of charity which is drawn by the maſterly hand of St. Paul *, and you will perceive that nothing is more eaſy than to graft upon them a firm and laſting friendſhip. They contain all the right principles and rudiments of that delightful ſentiment; and theſe being once fairly laid before the world, every man was left (as it was fit he ſhould be) to make the application of them himſelf, at his own diſcretion, to the purpoſes of friendly union, according as inclination led, or opportunity invited him. There can want nothing more than the concurrence of two congenial minds, to kindle theſe ſparks of friendſhip into a flame, much purer, I apprehend, and brighter, and more permanent, than ever glowed within the breaſt of a heathen.

* 1 Cor. xiii.

From

From the whole then of this enquiry, it appears, that whoever cultivates the duties preſcribed by the Goſpel, will be of all others the beſt qualified for a virtuous friendſhip. But, what is of far more conſequence to the world in general, he will alſo be the beſt qualified to live happily without it. Friendſhip is a bleſſing, which, like many others in this world, falls to the lot of few. It depends ſo much on conſtitution, on accident, on a concurrence of circumſtances which ſo rarely meet, and which no one can command, that by far the greater part of mankind paſs through the world, and paſs through it very comfortably too, without ever having the good fortune to find that perſon whom they can with ſtrict propriety call a *friend*. Had then the Goſpel given ever ſo many precepts or directions on the ſubject of friendſhip; to a few refined philoſophic minds they might perhaps have been of ſome uſe. But it was not for theſe only, it was for the *multitude* alſo, for the people at large, that the Goſpel was deſigned. And to theſe it muſt be no ſmall ſatisfaction to find, that a connection which they often want the inclination,

inclination, and oftener ſtill the power, to form, is not enjoined, is not recommended, is not even mentioned, in the Goſpel, and that they may go to heaven extremely well without it. A faithful friend is indeed, as the ſon of Sirach no leſs juſtly than elegantly expreſſes it the *the medicine of life* *. And happy they are who find it. But to thoſe who do not, or by any fatal accident are deprived of it, Chriſtianity has other medicines, other conſolations in ſtore. It has pleaſures to beſtow, which will amply countervail thoſe of the ſincereſt and firmeſt friendſhip. It gives that peace of mind, which nothing in this world, not even friendſhip itſelf, can give. It ſecures to us the favour of that Being, who is able to be our friend indeed. Our earthly friends may deceive, may deſert us, may be ſeparated from us, may be converted into our bittereſt enemies. But our heavenly friend has declared (and he is one that may be truſted) that if we adhere faithfully to him, he will never leave us nor forſake us †. It is, in ſhort, in every man's power to be, if he pleaſes, though not preciſely in the ſame ſenſe

* Eccluſ. xi. 16. † Heb. xiii. 5.

that

that St. John was, yet in a very important ſenſe, *the friend of Chriſt*. We have our Saviour's own word for it. "Ye are my friends," ſays he to his diſciples, "if ye do whatſoever "I command you *." Nay, he has aſſured us that he will conſider every real Chriſtian as united to him by ſtill cloſer ties. This aſſurance is given us in one of thoſe noble ſtrains of divine eloquence which are ſo common in the ſacred writings. Our Lord being told that his mother and his brethren ſtood without, deſiring to ſpeak with him, he gives a turn to this little incident, perfectly new, and inexpreſſibly tender and affectionate. "Who is my mother," ſays he, "and who "are my brethren? And he ſtretched forth "his hands towards his diſciples, and ſaid, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For "whoſoever ſhall do the will of my Father "which is in heaven, the ſame is my bro-"ther, and ſiſter, and mother †."

* John xv. 14. † Matth. xii. 46—50.

FINIS.

Lately Publiſhed,

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LETTER

TO THE

CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF CHESTER,

CONCERNING

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

By BEILBY,

LORD BISHOP OF THAT DIOCESE.

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